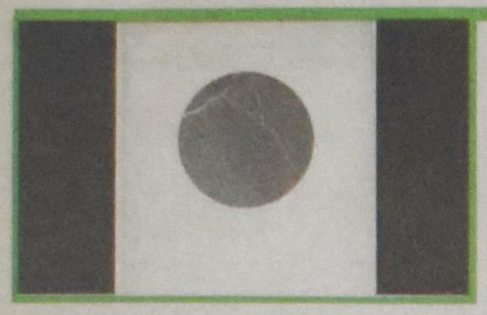

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CHRISTIAN COURIER

Leadership requires action on poverty

Joe Gunn and **Chandra Pasma**

OTTAWA, Ont. – "Leadership is about finding a balance between needs," said Finance Minister Jim Flaherty in presenting Budget 2011. Unfortunately the budget he delivered failed to address the real needs of Canadians. In addition to our fiscal deficit, Canada has a social deficit. This includes rampant poverty, growing inequality and the blight of homelessness. Yet the budget did not address any of these issues.

In contrast, several weeks ago leaders of faith communities demonstrated a different approach to leadership. Leaders from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and other faith communities gathered in Ottawa to urge federal politicians to respond to poverty. Bruce Adema, Director of Canadian Ministries, represented the Christian Reformed Church, as well as playing an important role at this meeting as Chair of the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches.

Faith communities are often on the frontlines of service to the poor, and they see the rising need for their services. They also understand the inadequacy of their services. They know that if we are going to see change, we need federal government action on poverty.

"Faith communities across Canada recognize, across our many different traditions, the unified impulse of all religious practice to nurture and share in community with those who are poor, and stand in solidarity with them," the faith leaders said in a closing declaration. "We call upon the government to champion public policies that defend everyone's rights to dignity and abundant life." Together, they specifically called for a federal poverty reduction plan and a national housing strategy.

Reps from a dozen different faith communities meet at Ottawa's Interfaith Forum.

The multi-faith gathering took place right after the government issued its response to a House of Commons committee report on poverty. While the committee made 58 thoughtful and substantive recommendations on how the government could and should design social policy to lift people out of poverty, the government dismissed the report, stressing labour-market attachment instead. This was the same response the government gave to an earlier Senate report, which made 78 comprehensive recommendations.

The faith leaders pointed out the inadequacy of the government's response, calling for the government to move beyond the rhetoric of jobs and growth to address the immediate needs of our neighbours.

Economic action scam

Unfortunately, Budget 2011 is built on this same idea – that jobs are the answer to fighting poverty and inequality. A key focus in the next phase of the government's Economic Action Plan centers on continued job growth. The government's plan to create jobs, however, seems to be nothing more than keeping taxes low and providing a few "boutique" tax credits to businesses. Tax cuts create far fewer jobs than government spending on infrastructure, but that element of the Economic Action Plan is being canceled.

The government is also ignoring the reality that jobs alone don't provide economic recovery or security. In his budget speech, Flaherty stated that since July 2009, more than 480,000 jobs have been

See **Leadership** *on page 2*

Christians in Pakistan face widespread hatred

Walter Miedema

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan – What began as a quarrel in a farmer's field near Ittan Wali in the Pakistani province of Punjab now has the potential to tear apart a nation.

In the summer of 2009, Christian mother of five Asia Bibi (also known as Asia Noreen) was asked by her supervisor to fetch water for her crew. When she returned, her Muslim co-workers objected to being served water by a Christian and an argument broke out. Shortly afterward Bibi's co-workers accused her of blasphemy, claiming she had stated that insects had feasted upon the prophet Muhammad's ear prior to his death, that he married his first wife for wealth and that the Quran was written by man and not God.

Bhatti, assassinated March 4, with two of Bibi's daughters.

This accusation is a very serious one, with not only religious but legal implications. In 1860, when Pakistan was still part of India under British rule, the law stated that a two-year prison term be given to anyone who damaged a place of worship "with the intention of thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons." The law was amended in 1986 while Pakistan was under the rule of Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq. Its current incarnation is known officially as section 295-C of Pakistan's Penal Code. No longer does it make any distinction on the basis of the intent of those accused. It states: "Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to fine."

In the last ten years as many as 46 people have been killed while

See **Christians** *on page 2*

News

Leadership *continued*

created by the Canadian economy – more jobs than were lost during the recession. However, what Flaherty failed to mention was that many of these newly created jobs were part-time or temporary.

Nearly one million Canadians are now working part-time involuntarily. This trend toward a labour force made up increasingly of part-time or temporary workers means that more Canadians will be faced with employment insecurity and economic hardship. Many will be forced to work multiple jobs just to pay the bills. Workers will also not qualify for the benefits made available to their full-time counterparts. Simply getting people jobs is not a sufficient response to economic insecurity, let alone poverty.

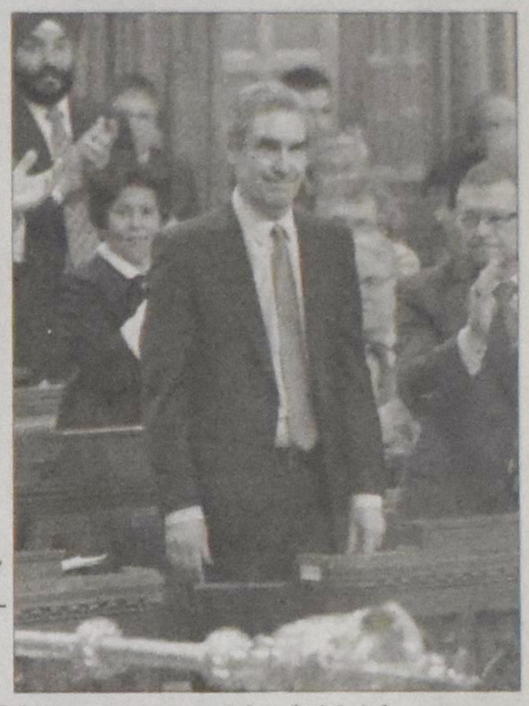
The budget offers only a few social policy crumbs, not a comprehensive response to poverty and insecurity. While the top-up to the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors is welcome, it is too small to make much difference – only $50-70 per month for the poorest seniors. The commitment to complement community efforts to address the challenges confronted by the homeless, the persistently unemployed and at-risk youth is positive (though specifics remain undefined), but this suggests a front-line approach that does nothing to address the widespread systemic issues facing Canada's most marginalized.

Meeting real needs

A critical piece that is consistently missing from the government's interpretation of what Canadians need, want and have a *right* to is that a "low-tax plan for jobs and growth" doesn't put food on the table, a roof overhead, or address mental health issues or stigma. In short, it does not provide marginalized Canadians with a life of dignity.

What is needed is an effective and enduring approach to reducing – and eventually eliminating – poverty. A comprehensive federal poverty elimination plan that addresses key areas, including income security, housing, and child care. A federal Act that ensures an ongoing commitment to results. And sufficient and sustained investment in the social security and well-being of all Canadians.

This is what the faith leaders called for when they demanded government action on poverty. This is what the *Dignity for All* campaign, supported by many faith communities, is also calling for. Now that an election is underway, it is important that we keep these goals front and centre. Real leadership shouldn't ignore the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized Canadians. Real leadership shouldn't ignore the voices of its faith communities.

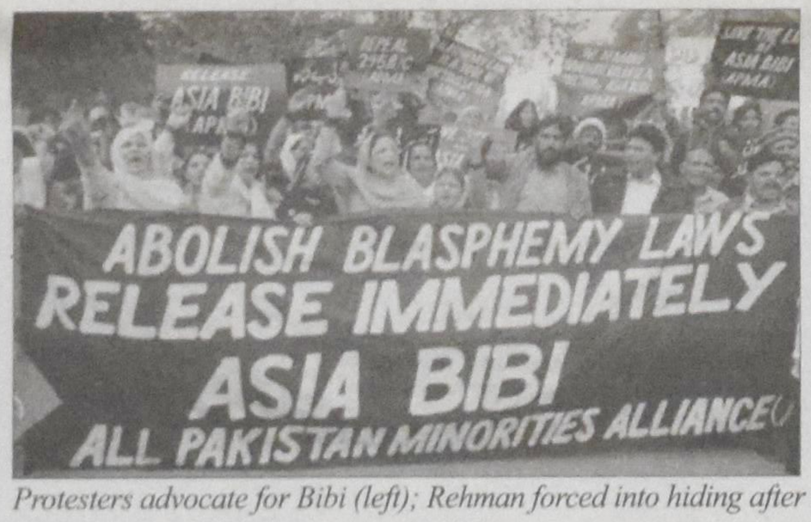


Flaherty delivers the budget (left). Harper in the House the week his government fell (centre). Ignatieff stands to vote on the non-confidence motion on March 25 (above).

As the faith leaders said, "It's time for leadership. It's time to act."

*Joe Gunn and Chandra Pasma work at Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), a faith-based research and education organization. CPJ plays a key role in Dignity for All (**dignityforall.ca**). To read the faith leaders' Declaration, "A Time For Inspired Leadership and Action," as well as CPJ's response to the budget, please see **cpj.ca**.*

Christians *continued*



Protesters advocate for Bibi (left); Rehman forced into hiding after suggesting changes to blasphemy law.

on trial for blasphemy before their sentences could be delivered. 28 were Christians.

Tools of oppression

The trouble with this law is verifying the truth of the accusations. Many accusers are not forthcoming in describing the supposed blasphemous statements because they claim that in repeating the accused blasphemer's words, they themselves are blaspheming.

Asia Bibi's co-workers shared their accusations with a local cleric; shortly after, a mob gathered around her house and beat her and members of her family. By the end of November 2010, the Pakistani court in the town of Shekhupura had sentenced Bibi to death and imposed a fine of the equivalent of $1,100 U.S.

From prison, condemned Christian Asia Bibi is fasting "for justice" during Lent.

The sentence, however, needed to be ratified by the High court in the Punjab provinces' capital of Lahore for the death penalty to be carried out. For the past year and a half, Asia Bibi has remained in jail fearing for her life. During this time at least one conservative cleric has offered $5,800 U.S. to anyone who is able to kill her.

Shortly after she was imprisoned, Salman Taseer, governor of the Punjab province and a well-known protector of the Christian minority, took notice of her situation and made motions to appeal for a Presidential pardon for Bibi. Previously, Taseer had opposed section 295-C, which he referred to as "the black law." At the same time, Sherry Rehman, a member of Pakistan's ruling party, prepared to submit a proposal to the government to amend section 295-C.

On January 4, 2011, however, everything changed. Taseer was shot 26 times with an automatic rifle by Mumatz Qadri, one of the men officially assigned to protect him. Qadri immediately surrendered but made it clear that he had killed Taseer because he disagreed with his views on the blasphemy law.

Due to the circumstances Sherry Rehman was pressured by her party to refrain from submitting her proposal, and resigned from government. Since then, she has received death threats and even been accused of blasphemy herself for her attempts to alter the law. Rehman has defended herself, stating, "The changes I had submitted were simple: that people be given a chance to prove their innocence like in all laws, and that cases be tried at the Higher courts, that penalties be given according to the Quran, and that no one makes false charges in the name of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) who swore always to defend the innocent."

Second assassination

Four weeks ago, the world was shocked by another violent death in Pakistan over its blasphemy law. Shahbaz Bhatti, the only Christian member of the Pakistani cabinet, had filed an official appeal to the High court and the government last November on Bibi's behalf. Bhatti himself believed that Bibi was innocent and publicly supported the process of appealing her conviction. Like Salman Taseer, he also opposed the blasphemy law.

On March 4, Bhatti was killed and his driver seriously injured when his car was sprayed with gunfire as it left his mother's house. The Pakistani branch of the Taliban quickly claimed responsibility, saying they killed him because he was a known blasphemer and opposed the blasphemy law. Christians throughout the Punjab province took to the streets the following day and demanded justice.

Bibi is not the only Pakistani to be charged and sentenced under this anti-blasphemy law. In recent months a high school student has been placed in a juvenile detention center for making negative statements about Muhammad on an exam. An illiterate couple has been charged because a piece of plastic they found and used as a roof over their latrine had a religious verse on it, and a doctor has been arrested for throwing out a business card of a man whose first name was Muhammad. Qamar David, a Catholic who died in prison March 15 while serving a life sentence for blasphemy, might have been murdered by extremists, although Pakistani authorities say he suffered a heart attack.

Riots and protests have been occurring throughout Pakistan on both sides of the issue. The current government needs to maintain the support of conservative Islamic groups to maintain power. The leader of at least one minority party, Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman, agrees that efforts must be made to minimize the abuse of section 295-C, but for now, no one is formally willing to suggest amending the law itself. And Asia Bibi remains in prison. It may be, as governor Taseer described before he was murdered, that the Islamization of society is a struggle "for Pakistan's soul."

Walter Miedema (walter.p.miedema@gmail.com) lives and writes in Vancouver, B.C.

News

Principalities & Powers
David Koyzis

Hope in uncertain times

After writing in this space for 21 years, people sometimes ask whether I ever have trouble coming up with something to write about. Occasionally there are slow news months when I have to wrack my brain for something fresh and interesting for readers. But most of the time, given that my subject is politics which is constantly in flux, something almost always suggests itself without my having to look too hard.

More frequently my difficulty is in trying to decide which of the fast-breaking developments in the world to choose from. This month is like that. In my previous column I wrote about the revolution in Egypt that toppled the 30-year presidency of Hosni Mubarak. Now Libya, which initially looked set to follow suit, is locked in a civil war between forces loyal to strongman Muamar Qaddafi and rebels seeking to unseat his government. As I write, it is unclear which side will win, but the intervention of the United Nations and a multilateral "coalition of the willing" could tip the balance in favour of the rebels.

U.S. fighter jet malfunctioned and crashed March 22 east of Benghazi. AP

By the time this appears in print, the contest could be decided, but I will risk looking foolish and take the opportunity to raise doubts about the legality of intervention to overthrow an existing government, however venal and ruthless. The U.S. and its allies intervened in Iraq eight years ago on the pretext of stopping Saddam Hussein's supposed efforts to destabilize the region by building weapons of mass destruction, which, of course, turned out to be illusory.

Although Qaddafi actively fomented terrorism in the 1980s, he has been largely quiet since then, posing no real threat to Canada, the U.S. or Europe. On what grounds then do these countries intervene on behalf of the rebels? To be sure, the Arab League and the UN Security Council have given their approval based on the responsibility to protect, but is that sufficient to create international law constituting a precedent for future such actions? Legal or not, ordinary Libyans are suffering in this conflict, which we must hope and pray will be short.

'Where were *you* when . . .'

Despite the importance of the war in Libya, the unfolding disaster in Japan has nearly bumped it off the front pages. Few of us can fail to be moved by the footage of the magnitude-9.0 earthquake, the tsunami and the subsequent troubles at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. Of course Japan is one of the most seismically active places on earth, and it has been hit by earthquakes before. But the enormity of this recent event is nearly unprecedented in modern times.

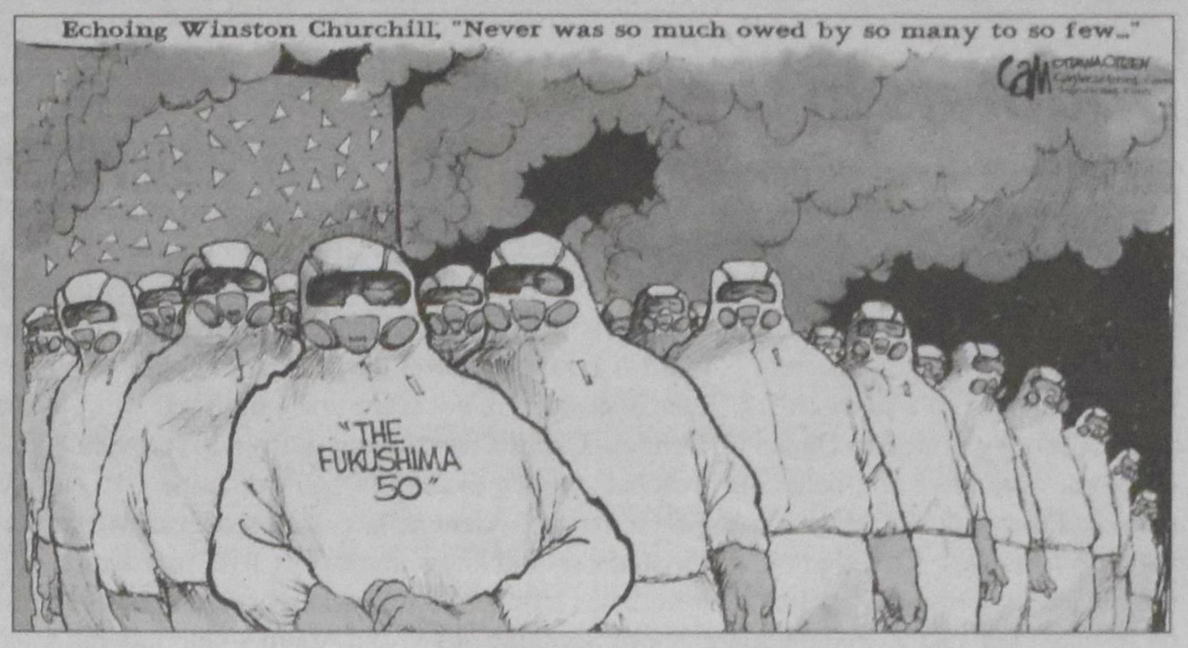
This hits home for all of us because the forces of nature are so obviously out of our control. One can build buildings to withstand earthquakes up to a certain level of strength, but one cannot hold back the amount of water unleashed by a tsunami. All one can do is try to escape to higher ground in the few precious minutes one might have.

Can Japan's PM Kan rebuild his nation?

It is difficult to predict how this will impact the current Japanese government of Prime Minister Naoto Kan, the future of nuclear power there and elsewhere, and preparations for emergency response around the globe. However, I can predict with virtual certainty that, in light of the events of recent weeks, someone will ask: Where is God in the Libyan civil war? Where was God during the Japanese catastrophe? Atheists and agnostics will see these as evidence of God's non-existence. Christian apologists will weigh in with their own efforts to justify the ways of God to human beings.

I wish I were blessed with the wisdom to offer something that would banish people's doubts and bring them to their knees in homage to God. However, I doubt that all the wisdom in the world – being, after all, merely human wisdom – is capable of doing this. The most I can do is to draw attention to those gospel passages in which Jesus, the suffering servant, tells us that the kingdom of God is at hand. To be sure the kingdom has not yet come in all its fulness. As surely as Jesus suffered on the cross for our sins, there is still much suffering in the world in between the times. Yet as we celebrate the feast of Christ's resurrection, we know that there will come a time when tears will cease to be shed and the rule of Christ and his saints will extend over a once but no longer unruly world.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of Political Visions and Illusions.



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Editorials

Doubters in the pulpit

Angela Reitsma Bick

"There is no loving, all-powerful God," a deep, southern voice says. The anonymous "Adam" is being interviewed on CBC radio via a sat phone he's hooked up to a laptop in his car. It's Sunday afternoon with host Mary Hynes on *Tapestry*. And it's not unusual to hear Christianity slammed on the left-leaning CBC, but this feels a little different – Adam is a minister. Over the next hour, Hynes explores the results of a study called "Preachers who are not believers" published by well-known atheist and Philosophy professor Daniel C. Dennett. Using a research grant from his university, Dennett and a colleague found five non-believing preachers willing to answer their questions. CBC interviews two of them and then talks to Dennett himself – a man confident he has "exposed a real weakness in religion."

Despite its bias, it's a study that Christians should know about. The five ministers, most of whom remain anonymous, confess that their faith has left them for a variety of reasons. Several were troubled by research that challenged the inerrancy of Scripture. 43-yr-old Adam's faith faltered after reading Christopher Hitchens' *God Is Not Great*. Evolutionary theory upset "Wes" when he could not reconcile a literal Adam and Eve with scientific claims. One way or another, these pastors lost their belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Which, you might assume, is a prerequisite for the job, yet none quit.

Some of the ministers stay because they see the church community as worthwhile, even without the bedrock of shared belief. One mentioned a desire to re-educate his congregation from within. Another considers his family: "[my wife] doesn't need to hear this right now." Surprisingly, "Darryl" and "Jack" admit that they've kept their jobs for primarily financial reasons. It's Darryl's livelihood; he doesn't want to burn any bridges by declaring his unbelief. Jack would quit this week if someone gave him $200,000 to "pay off everything." Adam also says that if he had an alternative income, he'd take it, but "this economy is just not a great time to change careers."

'Crime' of credulity

Whatever their motivation, you have to wonder how these pastors handle all the pretence. Well, with play-acting, evasion and half-truths. "I know what to say," Adam explains. "I know how to pray publicly." And so the charade continues, much to Dennett's unspoken satisfaction. He sees these ministers as foolish ("in a pickle") but lovably well-meaning; they've fallen for religion's scam, and he thinks their only crime is being too gullible.

But it's safe to say that Dennett isn't seeing the whole picture. These are real people wrestling with age-old problems. "Faith is not about believing that God exists," John Calvin wrote in 1559, which might surprise Dennett. "It is about trusting in the promises of a benevolent God." In other words, faith is just as susceptible to our human failings as anything else: God's promises do not change, but doubt can so easily cloud our view. Many people have echoed the heartfelt cry in Mark 9: "I do believe; help my unbelief!" It's a verbal confession of sin that Jesus follows up with an assurance of pardon by delivering the man's son from an evil spirit. If we confess our sin, God can close the gap. "We must all pass through the garden of Gethsemane," Canadian novelist Yann Martel writes in *Life of Pi*. "If Christ spent an anguished night in prayer . . . then surely we are also permitted doubt" (31).

The five ministers that Dennett interviewed, however, have replaced uncertainty with fake conviction. Doubt doesn't indict them – their hypocrisy does. This is a grave concern for any Christian, but particularly those in leadership roles. Without the integrity to resign their pulpits, Al Mohler says in a *Washington Post* response to Dennett's study, "churches must muster the integrity to eject them." Is it possible that this applies to our churches as well? Would Dennett find any unbelieving pastors in our ranks?

It's important to distinguish here between a crisis of faith and a complete rejection of faith. As the NIV note on Mark 9 says, "since faith is never perfect, belief and unbelief are often mixed." There is a difference between someone struggling with doubt and anxiety and someone who has hardened his heart enough to declare "There can be no God." The latter cannot lead a congregation. We should be on the lookout for both types: pastors in crisis who need support, prayer and a sabbatical, and pastors who have given up on God and cannot inspire faithfulness among believers.

Dennett is a self-proclaimed member of the New Atheism, and his study found what he set out to find. Five unbelieving pastors do not make a trend, as the CBC shamelessly suggested by lending credibility to only one side of a biased study. Nonetheless, Christians can use it as a warning to watch out for the eroding effects of uncertainty and despair in all church members, even ministers.

Angela Reitsma Bick is editor of CC and lives in Barrie with her husband and two daughters.

Christian Courier

Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to engage creatively in critical Christian journalism, connecting Christians with a network of culturally savvy partners in faith for the purpose of inspiring all to participate in God's renewing work within his fallen creation.

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The paper is published the second & fourth Mondays of the month.

Christian Courier
5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1
Tel: 905-682-8311; 1-800-969-4838
Web site: christiancourier.ca

We acknowledge the assistance of the Government of Canada, through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities. Canada

Seductive technology

Peter Frieswick

Do androids dream of electric sheep? Not yet, but they may be replacing your significant other soon enough.

At the beginning of March, the buzz of online science and technology magazines has been the Geminoid DK, what **FoxNews.com** has called "the creepiest, most realistic robot ever." It's the latest in a series of geminoids, or twin-robots, designed by Professor Hiroshi Ishiguro of Advanced Telecommunications Research Institute International to look like real people. In this case, the robot looks convincingly like Henrik Scharfe, an associate professor of Aalborg University in Denmark. It mimics human breathing, blinks and makes involuntary facial twitches. It even smiles.

So what does the creation of more human-like robots have to do with having an android for a girlfriend? More than you might think. According to its makers, the Geminoid DK "is intended to advance android science and philosophy" by helping answer such questions as "What is a relation?" Or to rephrase the question: can a person have a true relationship with a robot that looks human? This robot represents the growing trend in using technology as a way to explore, supplement, and even supplant human relationships.

Yes, I said supplant. As in, "to take the place of" or "overthrow." I know this makes me sound as sane as those foil-hat-wearing picketers outside of Area 51, so I want to point out that I am not against technology. In fact, I rather like it. Without it we would not have the internet, flushing toilets – I'm a great fan of those flushing toilets – or lifesaving medical machines.

However, while technology is neither good nor bad in itself, I am concerned that we are allowing it to turn our relationships into something not quite human. In a way, men are already replacing wives and girlfriends with the touch screen phone. To the popular male viewpoint this is easy to do because phone and woman share many of the same qualities. Both are great at multi-tasking. Both are shown off to the man's friends, who marvel at how sleek and sexy they look. Both know exactly what the man should be doing – and when – and utter alarming noises when things don't go according to plan. And as is the case between romantic couples, man and phone are also attached at the hip.

What I've done is reduce a woman to the sum of her stereotyped qualities in order to conclude that there is little difference between her and a phone. Which aside from being unfair, is also frightening, considering this is what most social networking sites do.

Lapsed connection

Take Facebook for instance, which operates under the faulty premise that by sharing photos and information about yourself online, anyone allowed to view your profile – Facebook's definition of "friend" – will be connected to you. In reality, it reduces friendship and connection to an exchange of facts, limiting actual contact. After all, if people can be your friends by simply accessing your personal information, they don't really need you, do they?

Even programs like Skype fall short of actual connection. This is why the majority of long-distance relationships fizzle if left too long in cyberspace. Despite being able to see and hear each other, they aren't in each others' physical presence. It appears that being able to touch the other person is required for intimacy – who would've thought?

Not everyone, apparently. In 2009 a Japanese man actually married a fictional character from Love Plus, a dating simulation game for Nintendo DS. The wedding ceremony was officiated by a priest and attended by friends of the man (*The Telegraph*, March 22, 2011).

Which, if I think about it, is okay, because that's one less goofball sharing his DNA with the gene pool. Though I do have to wonder: if Mr. I Married My Dating Game Character for True Love should one day let her run out of batteries, will the courts charge him with negligent homicide?

Probably not, because computers aren't human, which is really the point. God designed us is to relate to each other – not our computer screens. While using technology to stay in touch with friends is not wrong, we have to be cautious of using it to the point of isolating ourselves from full human contact. As believers, we are representatives of Christ on earth, called to speak his truth and love to our hurting, sinful world. If the incarnation teaches us nothing else, it should tell us that loving one's neighbour happens best on a personal level, in the flesh.

Peter Frieswick (peter.frieswick@gmail.com) holds a BA in English Honours and Theatre from Redeemer. Currently interning at a Christ-centred conference and retreat centre, Peter looks forward to entering a Master's level creative writing program.

Letters

Paying attention to slighted Psalms

I very much enjoyed the brief articles by Henry De Jong and Curt Gesch in the February 28 *Christian Courier*. Psalm singing is not the most notable practice in today's worship services, and their articles help us to call the psalms to our attention. Most Christian worshipers would agree that the biblical psalms are a rich source and resource for worship. "The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want" from the old Scottish Psalter (and many other versifications of Psalm 23) is probably sung in all churches at some point during the year, but often the psalms are neglected.

Harry Boonstra
Grand Rapids, Mich.

For some anecdotes from Boonstra's research into how we sing the psalms, see Odds and Trends *on page 20.*

God as creative Architect

After some reflection on the report of the articles by Calvin professors Harlow and Schneider in *The Banner* and *Christian Courier* about the relationship between the Genesis account of origins and the evolution theory, I feel that some further reflection needs to take place. For many years I have considered the findings of paleontologists in the fossil record in relation to the understanding of origins and how the two can be squared.

God has often been referred to as the Architect and Creator of all that exists. Taking this designation seriously, it is not unreasonable to compare God as an Architect with human architects. When an architect designs a building, he does not need to reinvent all the building materials in his design. He uses doors, windows, roof, foundations, and so on that he has used in other buildings in order to design a new edifice that meets the concept he imagined. I believe that God also did not need to reinvent the building blocks of DNA, eyes, ears, heart and lungs when he decided to create new creatures, including mankind. Just concentrating on the creation of man, I believe this accounts for the many similarities that have been noted between, for example, the DNA of animals and that of mankind.

This understanding does not negate the Genesis account of the creation of man and his subsequent fall into sin. It does not do violence to Scripture's comparison of Adam to Christ as the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:21-22). It also does away with the need to rewrite our confessions. I firmly believe that we cannot go wrong by adhering to the clear teachings of Scripture regarding the creation and fall of man. Nor do we then need to upset our brothers and sisters in Christ, who take Scripture in its entirety as the infallible Word of God, by calling their faith in question. I have found that scientific understanding has always been in flux and that we are on much safer ground by basing our understanding on Scripture.

Martin Kaldeway
Brockville, Ont.

Law enforcement does not equal repression

A letter to the Editor (Mar. 28, 2011) criticizes my article about the conflict initiated by natives in Caledonia (Feb. 14, 2011). Its author, Garth Cubitt, writes that this conflict "requires reconciliation: law enforcement will lead to repression, not to resolution." I agree that reconciliation is needed, but the perpetrators who resorted to criminal acts were motivated by revenge and anger, which makes reconciliation impossible.

To believe that law enforcement – remember this is no banana republic – is a form of repression would give free rein to mob rule. In this instance, the lawbreakers engaged in repressing innocent people who were at the receiving end of the violence, destruction and intimidation of the mob. How can such be justified in any way?

The letter's main point seems to be that the perpetrators were reacting to real or alleged historical wrongs that entitled them to behave as they did. But how can it ever be right that aggrieved people have the right to strike out against others who then become the victims of lawless behaviour? The old adage that two wrongs do not make a right is still true.

There is a lot of blame to go around here. Not in the least to the political and law enforcement authorities who gave the orders that tied the hands of the police. They were forced, against everything they knew about their role as protectors of the innocent, to look the other way when they knew they should have interfered and charged the lawbreakers. The result was another attack on the already fragile veneer of civility and respect for lawful authority.

Excusing natives for their thuggish behaviour is not doing them any favours either. It's not only the victims who are hurt, but also those who are encouraged in their violent behavior, because they endanger their very personhood, their very souls, by treating others out of revenge and hatred.

We live in a time when the very fabric of a free and civil society is under tremendous strain, and one major reason for this is that the difference between good and evil is becoming blurred. Then anger and hatred are given free rein and one evil begets another; there is no end to this vicious circle. But the Bible teaches us a different way: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Harry Antonides
Willowdale, Ont.

Salvation in the here-and-now

In his editorial "About Pulpits and Swords" (Feb. 28, 2011), Witvoet laments ". . . that our church did not choose as one of their goals to address the culture we live in," and speculates that the word 'culture' scared off people. Perhaps it is more serious.

If we ask our children what is the most important teaching of the Bible, they probably answer, "That Jesus died to forgive my sins", and if prodded what that means, they might say, "That when I die I go the heaven to be with Jesus." True, but incomplete!

The message of the gospel is that Jesus came to make disciples. What does Jesus expect disciples to do? The will of the father. And what is the will of the father? Turn the other cheek, walk the extra mile, love your enemies. When, at the last judgment, the righteous ask the King, "But when did we see you hungry, thirsty, sick, in prison, naked, and sick," the King answers, "In as much as you have done it to the least of these my brethren you have done it to me."

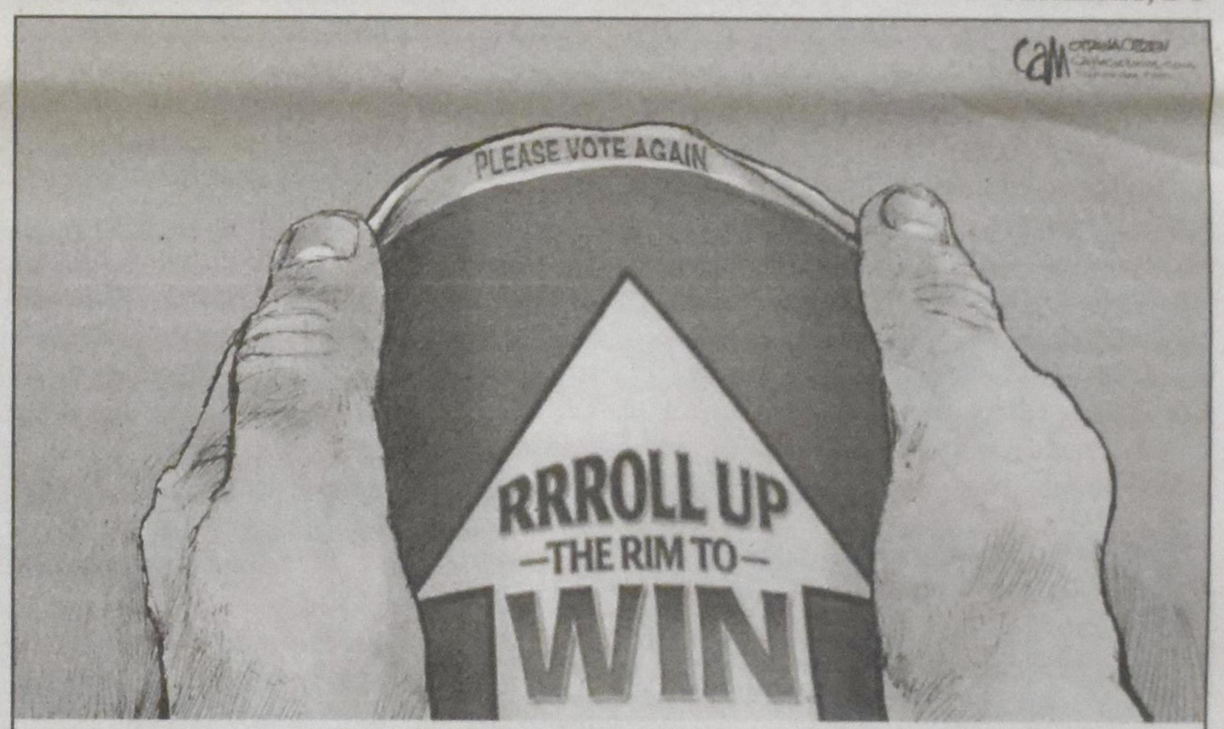
Salvation is when the spirit and power of Jesus work through us to do now in this life what we cannot do on our own. Salvation has as much, perhaps more, to do with the here-and-now than the here-after.

Restricting the gospel message to personal salvation and restricting salvation to forgiveness of sins and the assurance of heaven reduces God to a kindly old grandfather who generously overlooks our every indiscretion and turns Christianity soft, sentimental, sweet and romantic. Jesus' message is anything but sweet and soft.

Much of our contemporary worship, especially praise songs, dwell on wonderful forgiveness but fail to deepen the call to discipleship. If Jesus were to come and be among us, would he on Sunday morning put on his best clothes to sit in the local CRC or would he go to Vancouver's Downtown Eastside?

A robust ministry of Christian charity and radical discipleship could also lead the church to address causes of systemic injustice, motivate preachers to hold up newspapers from the pulpit (as Witvoet would have it) and get the CRC's Faith Alive to enlarge their study materials beyond prayer and bible study to include consumerism, the financial services sector, business practices, politics and popular entertainment.

Nick Loenen
Richmond, BC



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Subscriptions:	**Canada and USA**	**Overseas**
one yr. (24 issues)	$52.00	$100
two yrs. (48 issues)	$100.00	

Advertising deadlines: display and classified advertising: Tuesday, 9 a.m. (13 days before publication date) See classified pages or web site **www.christiancourier** for more details. (ISSN 1192-3415) Published second and fourth Mondays of the month.

Address all correspondence to: 5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1
Tel: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838
e-mail: Advertising: ads@christiancourier.ca
Subscriptions: subscriptions@christiancourier.ca **PRINTED IN CANADA**

News

Reformed Church of Japan gets help from CRC

TOKYO (CRCNA) – The Reformed Church of Japan is receiving help from the Christian Reformed Church in the wake of Japan's massive earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power plant damage.

"Our history together with the CRC and Reformed Church of Japan goes back to the early 1950s," said Gary Bekker, director of CRWM. The Christian Reformed Church in North America wants to make sure "to encourage and indicate that we value and respect them," he added. The RCJ was founded in 1946 by Japanese Christians who had remained faithful during World War II.

The RCJ contacted missionaries from Christian Reformed World Missions. That agency is providing help, but also turned the request over to the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC).

CRWRC is now providing aid to the RCJ and has entered various partnerships with other organizations to give relief the some of the thousands who need it. Larry Spalink, Japan field leader for CRWM, has been given a role similar to the one he played for the Reformed Church after the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995.

Said Spalink, "I am serving with Emergency Response Headquarters to translate from Japanese into English the reports of damage, appeals for support and summaries of relief and rebuilding activities, so that churches around the world will have this information."

While other missionaries are moving further away from the nuclear power plants, he says, "I am making a contingency plan for myself to evacuate, but at this time, I don't feel a sense of urgency to leave my home, and I have plenty to do keeping up with the role I've been given. I can't even count the number of emails, thankfully short ones, from so many of you, telling us of your love and concern."

CRWRC has set up a fund to help aid Japan. To contribute, visit crcna.org/Japan. Or give via credit card by calling 1-800-55-CRWRC in the U.S. or 1-800-730-3490 in Canada.

Some churches are being used as shelters.

Christian Reformed World Missions has been active in helping to plant congregations, as well as assisting various ministries contributing to the ongoing development of the RCJ.

No staff lost

The CRC's Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) is also active in Japan. "Our people initially stayed overnight in our office in Tokyo," said Bob Heerspink, director of BTGMI. "They have been able to return to their homes, where they remain for the time being."

Heerspink said the disaster is keeping the ministry from recording new programs for now. The ministry's websites, however, are up and running and new programming that addresses the crisis is being prepared. "I would ask for your prayers for our staff and the volunteers who work with us in ministry, many of whom are pastors of the Reformed Church of Japan," he added.

All CRC staff in Japan survived the earthquake and tsunami. But most have had to stay close to home because of damaged roads and highways outside Tokyo. In addition, the trains are still running on a limited schedule.

Besides the thousands killed and missing, more than half-a-million quake and tsunami evacuees are in 2,500 evacuation shelters set up in six areas of the country. In addition, Japanese officials continue to deal with a range of problems at the nuclear power plants that were inundated by the tsunami.

Australia:
Bishops caution Christians against Green Party agenda

SYDNEY, Australia (CatholicCulture.org) – Ten Australian Catholic bishops have joined in a statement warning the faithful against support for the country's Green Party. The bishops point to the party's public stance that violates "the beliefs and values of virtually all religious people, and the beliefs of many other people as well."

While praising the Green Party's goal of protecting the environment, the bishops reminded Christians, and particularly Catholic voters, that the party holds unconscionable views on a number of topics. "They are not only concerned for the environment." The 10 bishops – led by Sydney's outspoken Cardinal George Pell – called attention to the Green stance on religious freedom, funding for schools, use of recreational drugs, marriage, abortion and euthanasia. On each of these issues, the bishops said, the Green position is at odds with Christian morality.

Dutch lawmaker presses case for militant secularism

AMSTERDAM (CCO) – Sophie in't Veld, a Dutch member of the European Parliament (MEP), recently gave voice to what some Christians have called a "militant secularism in a remarkably polemical column" for the left-of-center British paper *The Guardian*.

The 48-year-old Dutch politician finds it ominous, she said, that religious leaders express political opinions at all, that leaders of the European Union speak with Church officials, and that the EU has diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

But in't Veld is particularly incensed that church representatives oppose efforts to promotè homosexual rights and to distribute contraceptives. In her view, even the concept of religious freedom is a threat. "Freedom of religion is often conceived as a collective right of religion to exempt itself from the law, particularly the EU fundamental rights," she asserted.

And what are the "fundamental rights" of Europeans? she asked, then answered her own question. "The EU fundamental rights are currently in the process of finding increasing expression in legislation" i.e., the European Parliament will decide by majority votes which rights are fundamental and which can safely be suppressed.

The Guardian column ends with a frank expression of in't Veld's view of the supremacy of secularism. "It is high time for the secular nature of the European project to be re-emphasized. Europe doesn't do God."

Dutch MEP Sophie in't Veld is "Secularist of the Year."

In't Veld is an honorary associate of the UK National Secular Society, which in 2011 awarded her with the Secularist of the Year prize. Not surprisingly, she is not a fan of Pope Benedict XVI, and has sought public condemnation of Benedict and what she called his "hatemongering" because of critical comments he made on the subject of "gender theory."

In 2009, a judge in Washington, D.C., ruled in response to a complaint she lodged that the United States government does not need to explain to Dutch MEP Sophie in't Veld why she must undergo additional security checks each time she visits the U.S.

CRC and Presbyterian Church in Canada become closer neighbours

BURLINGTON, Ont. (CRCNA) – The Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Presbyterian Church in Canada are celebrating an "Affirmation of Relationship" approved and endorsed by the CRC Synod of 2010 and the General Assembly of the PCC.

The affirmation makes the PCC one of only a few "churches in dialogue" with the CRCNA. In the agreement the denominations pledge to work even more closely together in the future than they have in the past.

(Above) Graphics symbolize faith: denominational logos of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Christian Reformed Church.

"The Christian Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church in Canada have been neighbors and friends for many years," says Rev. Bruce Adema, director of the CRC in Canada. "The 'Affirmation of the Relationship' outlines how our churches can demonstrate Christian affection and work together to reveal the Kingdom of God. We want to celebrate our unity as brothers and sisters in Christ."

For several years the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee of the CRCNA has had a subcommittee that met with representatives of the PCC. "The Affirmation of the Relationship is the fruit of that," said Adema.

In adopting the affirmation the 2010 general synod of the CRCNA noted that "the PCC and the CRC share the Christian faith, a similar Reformed doctrinal perspective, and variations of Presbyterian church government;" that "there are many longstanding relationships between congregations of the two denominations who join together in goodwill for worship, fellowship, and collaborative ministries;" that "both denominations have strong commitments to mission in Canada and around the world, to evangelism and justice, and to a prophetic view of the mission of the church in society;" and that "by developing this more formal relationship, the denominations together explore new horizons of mission that respond to Christ's calling to the church today."

A brochure describing the new relationship says, "Together we have prepared Christian education curriculum and other resources, worked with shared resources, both human and financial on the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, facilitated food shipments and CFGB growing projects across Canada, and shared in Ecumenical Ministry through KAIROS, the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Canadian Council of Churches."

The two denominations "encourage our respective presbyteries and classes, in addition to our local congregations to welcome exchanges of visitors and to engage in shared ministries whenever possible for the building up of Christ's church."

News

Former UK government minister picked for religious freedom post

LONDON, UK (CNA) – Ann Widdecombe, a prominent British politician and a Christian, was named last month to a "special envoy on religious freedom" for Aid to the Church in Need, a Roman Catholic ministry to help persecuted Christians and to publish their plight.

Widdecombe says she had "become increasingly alarmed by reports of violence and acts of intimidation against Christians," particularly in a number of countries where Christianity is illegal or severely restricted.

Widdecombe, who represented the Conservative Party as a Member of the British Parliament from 1987 to 2007, highlighted the inconsistency between Britain's extensive efforts to protect minority groups and opinions at home, and its willingness to overlook the treatment of Christian minorities abroad.

"We in this country are rightly concerned to protect the rights of minorities over here," she said. "We cannot therefore turn a blind eye to the plight of minorities in other parts of the world. In many cases those suffering most are Christians."

Biggest human rights scandal

Aid to the Church in Need's new global report "Persecuted and Forgotten?" indicates that up to 75 percent of religious persecution in the world is directed against Christians, mostly in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Widdecombe's criticism of British inaction on global religious freedom echoed comments by Cardinal Keith O'Brien of Edinburgh, who recently described persecution of Christians as "perhaps the biggest human rights scandal of our generation."

O'Brien, head of the Catholic Church in Scotland, accused British Foreign Secretary William Hague of adopting an "anti-Christian foreign policy" by doubling aid to Pakistan without demanding a guarantee of religious minorities' rights from that Islamic state.

Like Cardinal O'Brien, Ann Widdecombe is intent on bringing the issue before the public. "It is time to put our heads above the parapet and speak up in the name of Christians suffering for their faith," she said. "I am delighted to support the work of Aid to the Church in Need, which is doing excellent work to help persecuted Christians."

Widdecombe is a former government minister of the Conservative party and is also a published novelist and television personality. During the 1990s she left the Church of England to join the Catholic Church.

Her new role as special envoy for religious freedom will involve meeting regularly with staff from Aid to the Church in Need, along with travel to places where persecution is occurring around the world.

CRC names new Home Missions head

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Rev. Moses Chung has been named by the Christian Reformed Church's board of trustees as the denomination's new director of Home Missions (CRHM).

Chung will begin his position on May 1, taking over from interim director Ben Vandezande, a Canadian and veteran Home Missions leader.

The appointment pleases Vandezande, who said, "Moses Chung brings to Home Missions a fresh energy and vision for the mission of God in North America and around the world."

Chung says his dream is for the CRC to be a leading voice for mission in North America and around the world. "I really sense that God is at work" and that Christian Reformed Home Missions "will play a part in what God is doing in North America today." A key part of that task is raising up leaders, he asserted.

Born in Incheon, South Korea, Chung is married to Eunae and has two children. He is a 1993 graduate of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., and received his M. Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1999. He is currently working towards a doctorate in ministry and mission leadership at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

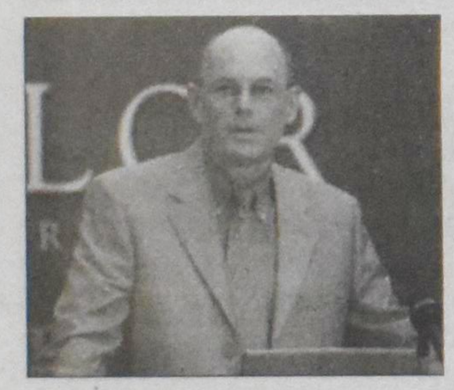
Chung has pastored two churches in California and was an associate pastor in Busan, Korea, at Sooyoungro Presbyterian Church, which attracts 30,000 worshipers each Sunday. There, he preached regularly and administered a staff of 200. He also helped develop mission leaders in Korea – a task he will continue in North America with CRHM.

As Home Missions' director Chung will focus on multiplying new churches and campus ministries, cultivating diverse mission-focused leaders and helping churches discern their place in God's mission. "I rejoice in what God is doing in North America and the world today," says Chung. "I am convinced that Home Missions, with its long history of being a 'leading prophetic voice and cutting edge' agency in the CRC, has important contributions to make."

One third of Americans attend evangelical churches

Marian Van Til

WACO, Texas – A religion survey conducted by Baylor University shows that fully one-third of Americans – 100 million people – are affiliated with evangelical Protestant churches. Evangelicals are the numerically dominant religious tradition in the United States, surpassing the number of Roman Catholics.



Byron Johnson, Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences and director of the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor, explained the survey and its implications in the most recent issue of the Christian journal *First Things*.

In an article called "The Good News About Evangelicalism" Johnson notes that the survey results contradict recent claims that evangelicalism is shrinking and that the younger generation is becoming more secular.

Those who argue for a newly emerging American landscape in which the conservative evangelicalism of the past few decades is losing numbers and influence are simply ignoring the data, Johnson says. "Membership in the mainline [Protestant] denominations declined 49 percent from 1960 to 2000 but membership in evangelical denominations increased 156 percent in the same period."

The Baylor Religion Survey is an in-depth study of American religious beliefs and practices using data collected by the Gallup Organization. "Instead of relying on questions about religious preference alone, as previous studies have done, the survey identified respondents by religious family, denomination and local congregation," notes Johnson.

That is significant "because of the declining importance of denomination in America." Johnson explains, "Nondenominational churches, almost exclusively evangelical, now represent the second-largest group of Protestant churches in America, and the fastest growing section of the American religious market. Many denominational churches, especially newer ones, avoid advertising or communication strategies that feature their denominational affiliation."

As an example he cites the Saddleback Church in California, whose pastor is Rick Warren, the well-known author of *The Purpose Driven Life*. Warren is a Southern Baptist, but not even all of his own church members know that. Also typical is Christ Community Church near Nashville, Tennessee. It is a member of the Presbyterian Church of America but it does not highlight that fact in Sunday services or sermons.

Loss of faith exaggerated

"This trend has affected popular statistics and has also served to exaggerate the loss of religious faith and evangelical influence in America," says Johnson. "Most previous research missed a new phenomenon: that members of nondenominational churches often identify themselves on surveys as unaffiliated or even as having 'no religion.' Because traditional surveys do not provide categories that adequately describe those who attend nondenominational congregations, their members often check 'unaffiliated' in typical surveys and questionnaires."

According to a Pew Forum survey, 44 percent of Americans have switched their religious or denominational affiliation. "Much of the media coverage suggested that something much different had happened: that a significant portion of the American population had left the faith of their youth," notes Johnson. "But that is not what the research actually discovered. These are two vastly different stories, with profoundly different implications for American religion in general and evangelicalism in particular. Switching churches or denominations should not be interpreted as a proxy for losing one's faith."

Johnson says the Baylor Religious Survey "took pains to find these nondenominational church attenders by asking them to identify themselves not only by their religious family and denomination but also by their local congregation."

As result they discovered four things: 1) that Americans remain connected to congregations, but less so to denominations or more generic religious identities; 2) that the unaffiliated are currently 10.8 percent of the population rather than the 14 percent or 16 percent claimed by other surveys; 3) that many of those typically identified as "unaffiliated" are not only affiliated with congregations but also attend evangelical churches; and 4) that America is considerably more evangelical than prior studies have found.

"While Americans often voice dissatisfaction with organized religion, evangelicalism is not in retreat," says Johnson. "Mainline Protestantism is; and evangelical congregations appear to be the beneficiaries."

Claims that Americans (including evangelicals) are rejecting faith contradict seven decades of survey research which revealed that the number of atheists in the U.S. has held steady at four percent. "If Americans are becoming more secular, why has this percentage remained unchanged…?" Johnson asks.

"The 44 percent of American adults who switched affiliation did not fall away from faith," he says. Instead, their "defection" shows that they care enough about their religion that they will abandon churches they think have abandoned the faith. As Rodney Stark noted in *What Americans Really Believe* (2008), "Americans mostly change churches in search of a deeper, more compelling faith," asserts Johnson.

News

Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman

Train up a child

In the early 1970s I began my first four years of grade school at Immanuel Christian School in Scarborough, Ontario. As a first grader, I was unaware that there was something different about the style of education offered at this school. It was a curriculum built on student-initiated study that offered considerable freedom to the students.

In his book entitled *Grace in Scarborough,* Robert VanderVennen has a chapter sketching the beginnings of Immanuel Christian School during a time when Christian schools were "experiencing a turbulent counter-culture in the early seventies." It followed on the heels of the 1960s, which saw educational movements influenced by books such as *SummerHill: A Radical Approach to Child-Rearing* by A.S. Neill. The SummerHill philosophy emphasized freedom; lessons were optional and children were allowed to do as they pleased in their studies. VanderVennen goes on to say about the school that "some mistakes were made while at the same time some unusually beautiful things were happening." This is consistent with my experiences as well. Children were given tremendous freedom to explore on their own, and I suspect certain kinds of students would sprout wings and fly in such a setting. But I was a student who needed a little more structure. I recall doing very little mathematics but spending substantial time doing art and reading. The freedom in the school environment also brought out a mischievous streak in me; I can echo David's words in Psalm 25 when he says "Remember not the sins of my youth."

We moved away from Scarborough as I entered grade five, and Willowdale Christian School became my new school. It was there that I discovered I was far behind my peers in subjects like penmanship and mathematics. I required substantial remedial help and it took time to adjust to a more structured learning environment. At Willowdale Christian School I met my new teacher: a poised, veteran educator named Mrs. Ferdinands who wore her hair in a bun and who did not tolerate any nonsense. This dear teacher graciously took me under her wing and quickly sized up my situation: I was not a slow child; rather, I simply "needed to be taught." I am grateful for the way the Immanuel Christian School in Scarborough had fertilized my imagination, and for the caring teachers who put up with my mischief. However, my transition to another school was not easy, requiring a substantial period of catching up.

Covenant eyes

With the advent of the Internet, some educators are suggesting new child-centered learning approaches using the computer. The advent of the web is challenging the place of books and the traditional structures of schools, classrooms and learning. Some are questioning if we still need schools to manage the delivery of content now that the web puts the sum of human knowledge at our fingertips.

Certain educational approaches seem to go in and out of fashion over time – not unlike thick ties and bell-bottom pants. Some of the ideas suggested in books like *SummerHill* presuppose that children are naturally "good" and will learn on their own. The truth is that children are born and conceived in sin and require proper guidance, even (or especially) with the sum of human knowledge at their fingertips.

It is now almost 30 years since Immanuel Christian School in Scarborough was closed (the buildings are now home to a day-care facility). In the enterprise of Christian education, we need to be constantly reforming and facing the challenges and philosophies of each new era. The current web era brings powerful transforming technologies that will shape both education and its delivery. New technologies used with discernment may enhance education, and educational approaches may go in and out of fashion, but the words of Scripture remain true: "train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Prov. 22:6).

Derek Schuurman (dschuur@csredeemer.ca) eventually overcame his handicap in mathematics and now serves as the chair of the mathematics, computer science, and physics departments at Redeemer University College.

Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang

The end is nigh(ish)

The most unforgettable Bible class I ever witnessed was taught by Ray Hendriks, when he was the principal of Rhema Christian School in Peterborough. He began by opening the book of Revelation at random. Then, for 10 minutes, he connected the imagery in the book to current events. Every so often he'd pause, point at the class and say things like "Don't you see it?" and "Isn't it clear?" By the time the lesson was done, the students believed every word he said.

Except, he had made it all up.

The lesson? Be careful about looking for signs of Armageddon and the End Times in current events because the book of Revelation is like the Bible's own ink blot test – you can read just about anything into it.

For centuries, people have been doing exactly that. As early as the first century AD, a mystic named Montanus said he knew the true meaning of writings of John. Every generation since has spawned its own prophets – from Nostradamus to Hal Lindsay – claiming to have the inside scoop on the End Times.

Mind you, this kind of eschatological unease isn't limited to Christians. A lot of people are anxious because the ancient Mayan calendar ends in 2012. Some people think this means the world will end also. Just the other day a friend asked me, "With all the natural disasters lately, do you suppose there's anything to this 2012 stuff?"

Here's what I said:

1) Far-away events feel closer to home

If the Sendai tsunami had happened in 1995, you wouldn't have seen it on TV – at least not right away. A news crew would have had to be there right when the wave hit, with a satellite feed to send the pictures around the world. Today, every cell phone has a video camera that can quickly upload images to YouTube. So news travels much faster.

Because we can see the images right away – and because real people and not journalists are the ones taking the videos – the events feel more immediate.

2) Events in the rearview mirror appear closer than they are

Here's a simple fact: time goes faster as you get older. The last big tsunami – the one in Indonesia – feels like it was yesterday. It happened in 2004. That's six years ago, already. This year it will be ten years – a decade – since 9/11. If you're over 20, let that one sink in for a bit.

There are all kinds of theories about why time seems to speed up as we age. Some say it has to do with dopamine levels and others say it has to do with psychological factors. But it may be as simple as the fact that when you're six years old, six years is 100 percent of your life, whereas when you're, say, 46, it's considerably less. Either way, events that feel close together, in reality, are actually spread far apart.

3) More people

In 1980, the world population was about fourbillion. Today, it's around seven billion. About 15-20 percent of the world's land mass is considered to be at high-risk for earthquakes and volcanoes. And despite great improvements in earthquake-proof engineering, the simple fact is that a bigger global population means a greater number of people are at risk from natural disasters.

And the places that are poorer and not earthquake-proof – like Haiti – suffer the most. The Sedai earthquake and the Indonesian/Indian ocean quakes were about the same magnitude, but the death toll in the 2004 earthquake and tsunami was much, much greater.

So are we nearing the end times?

Well, we're nearer than we were yesterday, I guess. That's just simple math. But you won't see me around downtown Bowmanville wearing a sandwich board and ringing a bell anytime soon.

Hopefully, what you will see is me reaching for my cheque book the next time disaster strikes. Because if the images we've seen don't move us to act to help those in need, our hearts must be made of unshakable stone.

I've often wondered what would happen if we took all the human energy expended in writing books, or creating movies about the end of the world – much less reading them or watching them – and channeled it into living as though the end could come at any time? I wonder which face humanity would show? Would we live selfishly and savagely, like in so many post-apocalyptic zombie movies? Or would we rise above that? Would we see, at long last, how beautiful and fragile and short our lives are – and how precious are the hours we get to share with one another?

The answer to that question – like so many others – God only knows.

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com) lives in Bowmanville, Ont.

Reviews

Faith and interdependence on the streets of Toronto

Bethany Van Lingen

When I hear the word "church," I think of a pastor in a tie and a service organized from the songs sung to the prayers offered .

This is the type of church that bloggers Taylor and Sabrina and radio talk-show host, Drew, expect to see when they visit Santuary Ministries in downtown Toronto. Taylor and Sabrina, who do not believe in God, will blog about their experiences at Sanctuary. Taylor, Sabrina and Drew will then talk about it on Drew's radio show. Their visit is described by Greg Paul, director of Sanctuary, in his book, *The Twenty-Piece Shuffle*.

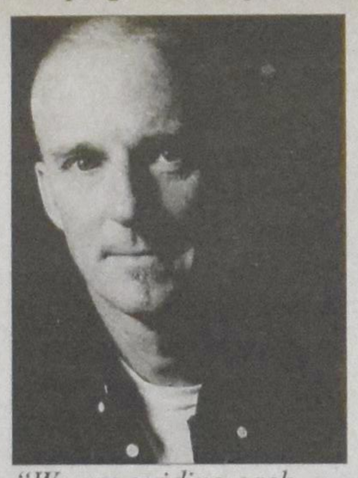
The service isn't at all typical. Songs are picked on the spot by the congregation. Paul, who will preach that afternoon but who doesn't like to be called a "pastor," is wearing a Hawaiian shirt. It's part of a "loud shirt" contest.

During a moment of quiet, Ken, a member of the congregation, begins to pray. His mouth opens wide so that the words can get past his lolling tongue and resulting stutter. "In spite of the stutter, Ken speaks joyfully about his delight in being alive, his gratitude for the good people and things that God has given him," Paul writes in *The Twenty-Piece Shuffle*. Ken drives his wheelchair up to the front and brings the service right into communion. He uses his right hand, the wrist bent at an awkward angle, to put his stronger left hand on the communion bread. Ken asks for help to break it. Someone does and Ken takes a piece.

Holding his piece up, left hand in his right, Ken says, "The body of Christ, broken for us. Come and eat," Paul recalls. This is church at Sanctuary. There may not be a tie on the pastor or an order of service printed, but this crowd is worshipping. After the service, Drew says to Paul, as recorded by Paul, "Obviously, the messiness of your socially awkward group of leftovers, especially Ken... well, obviously, this is really where Christ chooses to be."

Told in chapters of short stories, like this one, *The Twenty-Piece Shuffle* both critiques the approach of the North American church to the poor and shows what makes Sanctuary unusual. It makes for a fascinating look into the idea of outreach and Christian community. Sanctuary is more than a church. It also offers a meal drop-in, arts programs and provides a health clinic to the community it serves.

It isn't about charity from rich to poor at Sanctuary. By developing friendships with those at Sanctuary and on the street, as Paul writes, he began to see, ". . . my own addiction to productivity and my corresponding insistence on evaluating human beings according to their ability, or lack thereof, to be competitive in a productivity-oriented environment." It is not a surprising thought in a society where the top consideration is producing more for less cost. With this mentality, is it any wonder that the homeless and poor within are society are called "lazy" and told to just "get a job"?



"We are guiding each other on the way home"(p. 44).

At Sanctuary, it isn't about the material. It's about the relationship- with Christ and with each other.

So, the people at Sanctuary aren't Paul's "clients," they are his friends. "My friends and I call each other back to the true path when we have gotten distracted or lost," Paul says in *The Twenty-Piece Shuffle*.

It isn't an easy road. Many members go back again and again to the streets. Others get clean and sober only to fall back into their addictions. The "rich" at Sanctuary struggle with depression, weariness and disillusionment.

There's no pretense here. "You may, if you choose, walk along with us. We have not even the strength to pretend that we're okay," Paul writes.

The Twenty Piece Shuffle: Why the Poor and the Rich Need Each Other by Greg Paul. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008.

Sanctuary isn't an outreach program. It's a Christian community. That's a concept that shouldn't be unique. "The challenge," says Paul in his book, "for the first world church in the twenty-first century is to radically reform itself, such that the people who are poor are not merely the subject of outreach efforts, but are found right in the heart of our worshipping communities."

Through the stories of people Paul has journeyed with and a few of his own, he gives a powerful example in *The Twenty-Piece Shuffle* of how to live in true Christian community. Paul gives a model all churches ought to consider. Besides, if Jesus can hang out with the poor, the prostitutes and the disabled, why can't I make room on the pew?

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Arcade Fire sees community in *The Suburbs* and success on the red carpet

Seth Veenstra

Arcade Fire may the biggest "indie" band in the world.

While Arcade Fire remain signed to independent music label, for many rock-enthusiasts they may as well be the next U2. Yet even with the plethora of press, thousands of record sales, and successful world tours, this Montreal-based band still "upset" the Grammys, winning "Album of the Year" for *The Suburbs* (2010). Following their win in Las Angeles, they took centre stage at Canada's Junos, receiving four awards, including "Album of the Year" and "Group of the Year."

The paradox of being "a famous indie band" is indicative of the tension at the core of the band – a tension between mainstream and counter-culture, electric and acoustic, anthem and ballad. Arcade Fire take the loose structure of a rock song and then add the social conviction and energy of punk and folk asethetics. Rooted by guitars, bass, and drums, they adorn their songs with lavish arrangements drawing on an eclectic mixture of instruments including hurdy-gurdy, accordion, violin, organ, xlyophone, synths, recorders, horns, harps, banjo, mandolin.

Montreal indie-rock outfit, Arcade Fire, surprised fans and critics with their unexpected win.

Born in 2001, Arcade Fire was formed shortly before singer Win Butler moved to Montreal from the States. As they write in their first album's liner notes, "Members fled from Texas and Ontario at young ages and joined with local youth, making their home in Montreal." A potent mixture of friends and family, the sprawling seven-piece (plus) are more tribe than band.

The theme of building true community amidst an urban landscape runs like strong current throughout Arcade Fire's past releases. *The Suburbs* (2010) is no different. Trapped figuratively and literally amidst the artifice of urban sprawl, *The Suburbs'* characters struggle to navigate their way toward self-realization, while maintaining real relationships with their community.

The Suburbs acts as a synthesis of their previous albums *Funeral* (2004) and *Neon Bible* (2006). The narrators in *Funeral* describe a post-apocalyptic landscape where orphaned children create new families out of friends and neighbours.

"If the snow buries my, my neighbourhood . . . then I'll dig a tunnel from my window to yours," sings Win Butler on "Neighbourhood #1 (Tunnels)." Though these characters are surrounded by death, there is an underlying hope: the creation of a new family and a new society is possible.

If *The Suburbs* shares *Funeral*'s longing for community, it also shares the *Neon Bible*'s anger with elements of our society that distance us from others. Rather than imagining a post-apocalyptic world where children are given the freedom to co-create a new world, *Neon Bible*'s characters are stuck in the present, forced to watch as greed infects bodies, religion and communities.

Bitter anger fills Butler's voice on "Intervention": "Been working for the Church while my family dies." As the title of the album implies, superficiality and hypocrisy is corrupting the church. The end must be near.

While apocalyptic imagery runs through all three releases, in *The Suburbs*, the narrators' positions in history seem to be shifting. While *Funeral* presents a post-apocalyptic world, and *Neon Bible* describes a society on the cusp of collapse, the characters in *The Suburbs* exist within a more fluid temporal landscape, like multiple dots along an alternate timeline.

The complexity of Arcade Fire's lyrical content accounts for the wider scope their music presents. This can especially seen in "Half Light I" and "Half Light II." In "Half Light I" the instruments do not demand your attention. Instead, they create an atmosphere that seeps into your skin, while the vocals push the melody forward.

Two characters emerge in a dimly lit urban landscape. Reminiscent of the wild children described in *Funeral*, these characters were once locked up for their own protection; "but the night tears us loose and in the half light we are free." Yet the freedom is bittersweet. The "half light makes a place new," but in this new world the young are haunted by ghosts of adults past: "you hear human voices but they're only echoes/they're only echoes."

In "Half Light II", melancholy is supplanted by bass kicks driving an 80s-inspired synth riff through the listener's body. The ethereal movement of "Half Light I" evolves into visceral restlessness. "Wanna wash away my sins in the presence of my friends," sings Butler.

While strings soar, and guitars rip and tear, his voice comes at you straight down the middle. "Oh this city's changed so much since I was a little child/Pray to God I won't live to see the death of everything that's wild."

These two songs epitomize *The Suburbs*. Arcade Fire is a band full of juxtapositions: despair and hope, anger and joy – presented without a hint of irony. Their songs are both intimate and anthematic; and while instruments are often multi-layered into tremendous curtain of sound, the production never feels over-wrought or too slick. Human rawness remains.

The Suburbs. Sonovox, 2010.

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The Story: open doors

Heather Wright

Joe Manafo apologizes for the mess as we enter his Sarnia church. Computer keyboards and monitors are on the floor when you walk into the downtown storefront of *The Story*. A box waits by the door for the UPS delivery man and cords snake around mic stands and stools in the worship area. Manafo says it needs to be straightened up before the Justice Film Festival that night. Next Friday the space will host Beatty and Beth's Stag and Doe. It's not unusual to find "non-church" activities in the building. It's intentional - part of the plan to "be a hub here for the downtown," says Manafo. "To root the kingdom, God's kingdom, deep here."

The Story is part church, part community center. Manafo has been a youth pastor for 12 years, working across Canada in Pentecostal Assemblies. Some of that time was spent in Sarnia, where he befriended Nathan Colquhoun. They kept in contact when Manafo moved west for work. Years later, the two friends began talking about planting a church in downtown Sarnia, where Colquhoun still lived. Manafo and his wife eventually returned to Sarnia and started a house church. By 2008, Manafo and Colquhoun were convinced it was time to move downtown.

With the Free Methodist Church supporting the church plant, Manafo and Colquhoun went looking for a building. They eyed other storefronts, but chose 179 Christina Street when the landlord accepted their offer to rent the building for about one-third of the market value just to get someone in the long-vacant but totally renovated building. The vision for *The Story* was simple and, as its website says, "unhidden. We want to create an environment and opportunity for good. Our practice is simple: Love God, love others and tell His story."

A sacred space for earthy questions

That means the building is used as a "sacred space" welcoming everyone at 10:10 a.m. on Sundays to grab a spot on one of the secondhand couches. The casual setting allows people who don't feel at home in a traditional church to ask tough questions without fear. And the discussion can be pretty raw sometimes.

Pastor Joe Manafo tells his story from the couch.

Manafo recalls his first year when he was talking about Adam and Eve's fall from grace and one man "dropped the F-bomb," adding that "God set us up" to sin. Another Sunday, one woman explained how she "hated" the story of Noah and the ark because the Sunday School version was cute with all the animals arriving two by two, but in the end "everybody dies" making it hard to understand the wrathful God of the Old Testament. "Those hard questions don't scare God," says Manafo, who encourages the 75 or 80 people to give opinions and ask questions during the Sunday service. "The truth is the truth. We want people to own their faith, to sort it out, to figure it out. Just because I have a reverend in front of my name doesn't mean I have all the answers." That attitude attracts those who are giving God one last chance: "For them, this is the last stop," says Manafo. Others are "shaking their fists at the sky." Other members know they love God and want to serve him, says Manafo, but "they just don't fit in anywhere else." That encouraging and welcoming atmosphere isn't limited to the Sunday service and the potluck that follows. Manafo greets the UPS man like a friend and thanks him, helping him with the outgoing parcel. Each person who walks in the door gets a friendly "Hey there." And there are a lot of people moving in and out of the building.

The Story: *where church and downtown intersect.*

All about community

To draw the community in, *The Story* rents desk space with Internet access to small business people – including a film maker, a graphic artist, web designers, photographers and even a tattoo artist. The $150 a month they pay helps support the church. But *The Story* also opens its doors for events. It has hosted art exhibits, an exercise class, film screenings, and heavy metal bands.

That isn't something every church would do. Things can get broken, like the time someone kicked a hole in the wall. *The Story* didn't have the money to fix the drywall, so the hole was just covered up. That's fine with Manafo, who wants people to feel at home. "We make this space part of the tool box to reach out to the community," says Manafo. "It's more than just a worship space ...it's a gift back to the community."

The hope is that as *The Story* becomes part of the community, those who are wondering might come in on a Sunday and take a seat on one of those garage sale couches – when *The Story* becomes a sacred place. "There's nothing magical here," Manafo says looking around the renovated store. "But when we gather – that's when it is holy."

Heather Wright is a reporter for Sarnia This Week. *She attends Dresden CRC.*

Pastor Gil Clelland, smiling face of Sanctuary.

Sanctuary for the 'poor in spirit'

Cathy Smith

In a typical church basement in London, Ontario, there's a place where those in need of shelter, food, and companionship gather together and offer it to one another. It's called Sanctuary. Pastor Gil Clelland, a former Christian high school art teacher, and Darryl Reckman, a part-time student at UWO, run the drop-in centre located at 75 Blackfriars Road, the temporary home of London First CRC, one of the key partners in this ministry. Darryl and Gil also conduct a mobile ministry downtown where they connect with their "street friends" and facilitate a Bible study in the public library.

Recently I dropped in at the drop-in centre. People were playing cards, setting up lunch, working on art, potting plants and chatting. I could not distinguish between the volunteers and "the homeless," something Darryl found encouraging. He pointed out that Sanctuary serves to minister to spiritual impoverishment first, and that their "church" is open to all who need to meet Jesus, whether rich or poor. He explained that many individuals who become involved with Sanctuary are not necessarily homeless at all, but struggle in life for all sorts of reasons, including the stereotypical issues such as addiction, mental illness, and developmental disabilities, but also deep brokenness from their lack of relational rootedness. Darryl added that many of those who end up on the street or in need of Sanctuary's services are "homeless" long before they leave home. Pastor Gil and Darryl introduce hurting people to Jesus by building authentic friendships with them.

Sanctuary grew out of a Youth for Christ initiative. As an organization, Youth for Christ, however, maintains a "youth only" focus, and Sanctuary's leadership team saw the need to continue befriending street people into adulthood. The ministry is now temporarily under the umbrellaship of Sanctuary Ministries of Toronto, an urban ministry led by Greg Paul (author of *God in the Alley*), and by other supportive networking such as churches and individual donors. In the meantime Sanctuary London is applying for its own charitable status designation.

Darryl Reckman and Liz prepare lunch.

Finding refuge

I was warmly welcomed, even though I circulated with camera and notebook in hand. Mike showed me a painting he was working on, an evocative scene featuring a full moon reflected in a lake. He said he was thinking of calling it "Light meets darkness," and was planning to give it away. "That's my witness," he told me. "I use my talent to the glory of God." He then showed me another painting of a wolf baying at the moon in a ring of trees. "That's about my loneliness," he said.

Sanctuary is a place where loneliness is addressed. It's where sandwiches, conversation, affirmation and love are offered in the name of Christ. I saw things that pushed against my own prejudices. The "poor" indistinguishable from the volunteers. The poor with iPhones. The poor lifting each other up. The poor sharing joy and laughter. When I asked where the food for the meals comes from, my neighbour quipped with lightning wit, "From the grocery store." Sanctuary is a place where the "poor in spirit" experience a taste of the kingdom of heaven.

Cathy Smith (cathy@christiancourier.ca) is features editor with CC.

Bringing 'living water' to a desert city

Rod Hugen

One of the beautiful promises of Scripture is found in Psalm 68:6 where we are told that God sets the lonely in families. As we look around our churches we see the grace of God as he gathers us together in communities, into families, where we can minister to each other and reach out with the gospel. God also gives us strong leaders whom he empowers to shape the places where these families can gather. Some shepherds are good at tending the sheep in the fold, but God also raises up those who have the desire and ability to create new sheep pens: church planters.

Soon after I had moved to Tucson, Arizona, as a church planter, my wife and I were scheduled to go to a training event in another city. As we were about to leave for the airport, we went over last minute instructions with our teenage son who would be staying behind. We told him to "water the plants, feed the cats, get the mail" and all the other things he needed to do while we were gone. As we were about to leave, he asked, "Dad, where is the list of people I call if I have trouble?" I stood there sobbing as I realized I had no such list in this strange city. It was an awful feeling and maybe the loneliest I have ever felt.

Tucson, Arizona.

Our family survived. I am thrilled to say that, thanks to God's amazing mercy in gathering a community around me, today I would be able to give my son quite a list of people to call! That experience released a deep longing within me to support church planters. It can be very lonely work. There are reasons for the loneliness, of course. One reason is that inviting people into any new venture opens a path of rejection. Many people say no or simply ignore an invitation to be part of the new church. It is hard to pour your life into people only to have them turn away to some other place or, more painfully, to turn away from God. It is hard to not personalize the rejection. Sometimes surrounding churches see a church plant as a rejection of their values and traditions and become judgmental. A related problem can be the sinful arrogance of the planters themselves standing in judgment of the surrounding churches and thus distancing themselves from the broader Christian community who might otherwise come alongside. Fear of failure enters into the mix as does insecurity about one's abilities. While we long for healthy interactions in these areas, the reality is that it is easy to succumb to isolationism.

Better together

The Village in the city.

One of the buzz words in the world of church plants is "clustering." "Clustering" is a targeted attempt to take a communal approach to planting churches in a city. Instead of just sending 'lone wolf' church planters to a city to either sink or swim, church planters and pastors of mission-minded churches partner together and commit to a broader view about how to reach a whole city or region with the gospel. It is a desire to gather together those who do the hard work of starting new churches and allow them to pray and dream communally, to create safe places to vent and fret, to allow people who have 'been there' to encourage those who are struggling, to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice, and to allow for mutual learning and the sharing of resources.

Clustering church planters together can be difficult because church planters are normally independent leaders. They are entrepreneurial by nature and willing to live at risk. They are normally gifted with strong faith and a vision for what might be. They are often willing to suffer and do without for the sake of the gospel. Strong leaders with these attributes are hard to oversee and even harder to care for. In working for Christian Reformed Home Missions, I have often heard denominational leaders refer to directing the work of church planters as the fine art of herding cats. I have been amused at the difficulty of just trying to get a bunch of church planters to a conference or workshop on time. Most church planters are highly creative and not likely to be equally organized and structured. One of my favorite moments was being invited to a small gathering of church planters only to discover that one had booked a flight at the wrong time, another had booked a flight to the wrong city, and a third discovered he had forgotten to book a return flight. We laughingly wondered about their competence, yet all these leaders were successful church planters and strong visionary leaders. "Clustering" church planters has worked well in various places throughout Canada and the United States. As Hermey the elf said, talking to Rudolph in *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, "Hey, what do you say we both be independent together, huh?"

Urban frontier

In Tucson the hope is to form four new Christian Reformed churches in the next year or so. It is a tough task to find the kind of leaders willing to take the risk of ministering in a city where there are less than eight hundred churches for 650,000 people. Pima County has approximately a million people and remains one of the least churched counties in America. The recent shooting of our congresswoman, Gabrielle Giffords, as well as the murder of six other victims, has left this city reeling and asking the deep questions of life. Tucson has always been a kind of wild west city where pulling oneself up by one's own bootstraps is valued. It is a city that contains a huge retiree population, a university presence, an air force base with many military support industries, and a 40 percent Hispanic population with deep ties to the Mexican culture. How exciting it will be to build churches on the campus, around the military base, in the heart of the barrio, and among the retiree population! Never has a field been so ripe and the need been so great for the gospel to go out. Our deepest joy would be, not just to see four new churches, but hundreds of churches, so that Tucson becomes a city that bows before the King of kings. "Clustering" seems like the best way to show a hurting world that we church planters are one. As we labor together, we witness to the citizens of Tucson about how much we love and support one another and also them.

With the recent Tucson tragedy, we had an opportunity to demonstrate that. We drove up Mt. Lemon to a spot that overlooks the whole city and, as a group of pastors, prayed for this city we have come to love. It was a powerful thing to pray for a city and to experience the presence of God together as we looked out on this amazing place where God has called us. It makes the things that divide us become small and trivial. The hugeness of the need becomes instantly apparent and we quickly realize our dependence on God to continue his mission. It makes us appreciate the unique gifts and talents that God has given us as individuals that collectively make us useful to him in his great work.

What can you do to help clusters? Pray for your missional leaders. Recognize the difficulties they face and encourage them with loving words and kind deeds. Offer your gifts and talents as needed. Remember that those who start new works are a gift from God to be treasured and loved and offer gratitude to God for those who are creating new spaces for God's church to gather.

Rod Hugen (thevillageparson@crchurches.net) is a pastor at The Village and also a church planter working for Classis Arizona (CRC).

Broken things

Those who find another use for broken things
are saints. The chipped teapot for a planter, a cracked saucer
for its bottom, the torn dress become clothes for a doll
– all converts to another life from the hand that rescues.
Thrift, some call it, that compulsion to save everything,
to still make it useful, but I call it grace – the way a person's life can
sometimes be resurrected from the ashes of suffering or loss –
to gleam through crack, chip, or tear
in hands that do not abandon.

Sally Ito

(See p. 13 for Sally's bio)

Series

The 'New Calvinism' ...how new is it?

CC is pleased to introduce a three-part series discussing the influence of New Calvinism in church and society. Our guest writers are both well-qualified to help our readers understand the influence of this theological movement. Wayne Brouwer is Associate Professor of Religion at Hope College and also teaches at Western Seminary and James K.A. Smith is Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College. As in our previous series, both scholars wrote their answers to the questions we posed independently of one another. There may be differences of opinion or essential agreement. We invite you to join the discussion via letters to the editor (editor@christiancourier.ca) or by way of comment on our website (**christiancourier.ca**).

Part II:

Who are the proponents of *New Calvinism*? How do they compare to one another and to more traditionally Reformed contemporary thinkers?

James K.A. Smith

The figures associated with the New Calvinism are, in one sense, fairly wide and varied: from a buttoned-down Southern Baptist seminary president to a grungy Seattle pastor known for his salty language and racy topics. On the other hand, one will also note clear trends: the faces of the New Calvinism tend to be white, male and conservative. So the so-called diversity of the New Calvinism is a relative assessment. But we could point to a range of leaders associated with the movement.

New Calvinists: the style guide

One of the most influential voices is that of John Piper, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Piper is not one to cultivate the aura of a guru, but the blend of his unassuming manner and forthrightly Calvinist theology has captured the imaginations of many young evangelicals. His early book, *Desiring God*, is a classic and was one of the first to retrieve the wisdom of Jonathan Edwards for contemporary spirituality. This was further developed in his later book, *God's Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards*. So, in a way, Piper was a New Calvinist before New Calvinism was cool. He functions as the "elder statesman" of the movement.

Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, is the "administrator" of the New Calvinism – a figure who is deeply invested in institution-building and speaks from that platform. Mohler oversaw a conservative revolution that quickly made Southern Baptist Seminary one of the hospitable hotspots for New Calvinists. Reformed folk might rightly wonder what kind of "Calvinism" could be at home in a Baptist seminary – this should confirm that the "Calvinism" at issue here is a fairly narrow doctrine of personal salvation.

Mark Driscoll is the "bad boy" of the New Calvinism: the upstart young buck who preaches in untucked shirts and jeans, with tattoos and a faux hawk. Pastor of Mars Hill Church in one of the hipster neighborhoods of Seattle, Driscoll's image is a million miles from Mohler's business-like demeanor and Piper's aw-shucks Midwestern humility. But theologically, Driscoll, Piper, and Mohler are very much in agreement.

Blogosphere theology

The New Calvinism is very much a wired Calvinism – it is more of a network than a movement, finding its coherence in websites more than buildings. One of the big tents that is home to the New Calvinism is The Gospel Coalition (thegospelcoalition.org). The site is home to some of the most influential bloggers in New Calvinism, including Justin Taylor and Kevin DeYoung. It also offers a plethora of resources, including videos, articles, and book reviews by influential pastors such as Tim Keller and C.J. Mahaney as well as some go-to theologians for the movement, particularly D.A. Carson.

However, the Gospel Coalition also highlights something strange about the New Calvinism. While it bills itself as a Reformed expression of Christianity, it turns out that the network seems to be able to absorb an incredibly wide range of denominational (and nondenominational) identities. Most peculiarly, this "Reformed" network includes more Baptists than Presbyterians, and more nondenominational folks than those from historic Reformed denominations. (Kevin DeYoung is one of the very few figures in the New Calvinism who is identified with a historic Reformed denomination, the Reformed Church in America.) Now, on the one hand, this is quite impressive: where else can one find such a devoted network of pastors and teachers who disagree on big issues like baptism, the sacraments, and ecclesiology? On the other hand, when you look a little closer, you'll recognize something that everyone in the Gospel Coalition agrees on: only men should be ordained.

In short, it turns out that being a "complementarian" (i.e., believing that only men should be ordained to the office of elder) trumps all sorts of other aspects of being Reformed. The New Calvinism lets Baptists describe themselves as Reformed despite their rejection of covenant theology and infant baptism. But the Gospel Coalition would look with suspicion on my claim to be "Reformed" precisely because I affirm the ordination of women. This might legitimately lead one to ask: just who's defining "Reformed" here?

Wayne Brouwer

Teasing his young granddaughter, a grandpa asked, "Where did you get all that bright red hair?"

She frowned pensively, and then said, "I must have gotten it from Daddy, because Mommy still has hers!"

"Reformed" identity today depends on where we get our family hair. Extensions of European Calvinism, for instance, generally carry the name "Reformed" somewhere in their organizational structures. These groups usually emphasize aspects of Covenantal theology, probing the relational nature of God's interaction with us. The Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism are the primers, establishing correct conversational language.

When filtered through the British Isles, Calvinism is more often known in "Presbyterian" forms, where greater stress is placed upon divine sovereignty and appropriate social authority structures. Here the Westminster Confession and Catechism shape theological speech.

A third clan of Calvinism emerged in the post-Enlightenment world, after rational skepticism had ravaged Protestant theology and left much of it split into the polarized camps of arid orthodox scholasticism and social gospel liberalism. Awakened from his dogmatic slumber, Karl Barth initiated a philosophic reinterpretation of Calvin's theology that used the Enlightenment's own tools and paradigms, but turned them against its scientific naturalistic conclusions. Barth's pervasive reinterpretation of biblical texts and classic theological ideas angered some (e.g. Cornelius VanTil) and annoyed many, but his emphasis on the "otherness" of God encouraged liberal theologians (e.g. Paul Tillich) to use his themes as symbolic contact points with a modern world which considered itself religiously come of age, and evangelicals (e.g. Dietrich Bonhoeffer) to proclaim transcendence in Barthian terms that fit a post-Christian society. It is Barth's rigorous God-talk that causes some contemporary theologians and preachers to identify him as their Calvinist hero, though many in the first "Reformed" clan (above) consider him at best a distant cousin and at worst a heretic.

New Calvinists: the family tree

Current popular versions of "Calvinism", particularly in North America, are often shaped by the second and third family clans. This is why *Time* magazine (March 12, 2009) identified "The New Calvinists" by way of evangelist Mark Driscoll, author John Piper, and organizational leader Al Mohler. Piper (born in 1946) has been in the public eye longest, publishing bucket-loads of books and articles from his post as pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. At the center of Piper's theology is his call to unceasing worship of the glory of God. Because God is first and last, and everything in between, all of created reality depends upon the Creator's goodness for existence, and responds to God's plans and desires. Piper wears the badge of Calvinist proudly, declaring that he is a double predestinarian – both the decrees of God to elect the righteous and to pass by the wicked for eternal punishment are ultimate and just and good, simply because that is the logical outcome of divine sovereignty.

Al Mohler is a younger contemporary (born in 1959) of Piper, and holds similar theological views. His role as a "New Calvinist" is based, however, on his different sphere of influence. While Piper promotes the sovereignty of God through his writings and teachings, Mohler has become the voice of inerrancy. As a seminary professor and then president (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky), Mohler was increasingly disturbed by the "liberalism" invading Baptist theology through historical-critical methods of scripture interpretation. Exercising firm authority in his presidential position, Mohler retooled Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to become a community of inerrantists, for whom historical criticism must serve the received biblical text as the infallible and authoritative Word of God without question or compromise. Because certain "conservative" interpretations of the text of the Bible are elevated to inviolable status, Mohler is revered by many and reviled by more for public statements about gender roles ("complementarian," meaning loving male dominance and obedient female submissiveness), religions other than fundamentalist evangelical Christianity (all, including Catholicism, are Satanic deceptions, and their adherents are doomed), Islam (it lies about God and is demonic), homosexuality (sinful in both identity and expression; if genetic research ever makes it possible to identify homosexual tendencies in the unborn, he would support medical intervention to alter this sinful propensity), and contraceptives (use of them is rebellion against God).

The youngest member of *Time* magazine's trio of "New Calvinist" exemplars is Mark Driscoll. Born into a Roman Catholic family (1970), he became passionately evangelical and Protestant, co-founding Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington, which calls street people and disillusioned former church members and scads of young people to repent

Columns

Intangible Things

Heidi Vander Slikke

Living as Easter people

Mom and Dad's 60th anniversary could not have been more blessed. We gathered at the Meiklejohn House, a Victorian mansion in Harriston. The owners, Ralph and Irene Drost, are wonderfully gifted for their role as hosts of the Bed and Breakfast and open their home for special celebrations as well.

My in-laws sat like royalty beside a marble fireplace in the front room. They welcomed guests in the afternoon for coffee and cake. In the evening we enjoyed a magnificent meal with the family. I watched the smiles all around the room and felt tremendously privileged. I fell asleep that night with a thankful and optimistic heart.

But I did wonder why Hetty and René, a dearly loved niece and nephew to Mom and Dad, hadn't called with congratulations from Holland. Over the years they've visited Canada many times, always spending at least part of their holidays with Mom and Dad. They had already booked their flight to Canada for this spring so they could be here to celebrate Mom's 80th birthday.

The next morning our phone rang. I heard René's impeccable English on the line. His tone, however, was deadly serious as he explained his situation. A week prior, he had been sitting in his office at work, uncomfortable because of pain in his side. The next day he visited the doctor. The day after that he learned that he had cancer in his liver, lungs and colon. Before the week was out, they had started him on an aggressive chemotherapy, with the slim hope of slowing the liver cancer and buying René a little more time.

His voice trembled as he told me that he could not bear to break the news to his Tante Riet on the phone and he asked me to tell my in-laws in person.

I drove to town searching for a way to tell them as gently as possible. As I pulled into the driveway, I realized no words could soften this blow. Mom and Dad greeted me with happy faces, but their smiles quickly faded as I delivered the message. The euphoria of the anniversary dissipated under the weight of this new reality. In the space of a few hours we had been brought down from the mountaintop to a deep, sad valley.

Two weeks later Mom came through our back door to tell me René had died.

The shadows of earth

I still find it hard to believe that this vibrant, joyful man is gone. At the age of 61, René looked forward to retirement next year. But he hadn't postponed a happy life. He and Hetty traveled extensively. René loved people, exploring new places, enjoying good food and the beauty of God's creation. He loved his children and grandchildren, and especially loved his wife. He often spoke of how blessed he was that each and every morning Hetty greeted him with a smile and breakfast made with loving hands.

Singing was an integral part of René's life. Along with Hetty and their best friends, Jaap and Gré, he sang in a choir every week. When they all came to Canada, they sang for us in English, in four-part harmony.

I suppose I thought he would live forever just because the Lord had blessed him with such an exuberant spirit. But he died peacefully in Hetty's arms, after having the chance to say goodbye to his family. The funeral testified to a life well-lived, with the comfort of knowing René's suffering had ended.

But for those left behind, the sorrow just begins. Hetty will eat her breakfast alone, missing the warm touch of her husband. Their daughters will try to explain to his four grandsons that Opa is now in heaven. Jaap and Gré will long to hear their friend's rich voice blended with theirs. René's parents will wonder why their son, with so much to live for, died before them.

If we're honest, at some point we'll ask God, "Why?" Intrinsic to the question is the conviction that he has the answer.

The image of a cross comes to mind. He is the God who did not spare his own Son from a cruel and undeserved death. Beyond that, he is the One who raised him from the dead and who promises the grave will not swallow us, his children, either.

In the words of the hymn writer, "Heaven's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee!"

Grief is real, and grieve we must, but not as people who have no hope. The darkness of Calvary is juxtaposed to the brilliance of Easter morning, just as sure as life is full of pain and joy. And we are called to live as Easter people, now and forever.

Heidi Vander Slikke (hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com) lives in Harriston, Ontario.

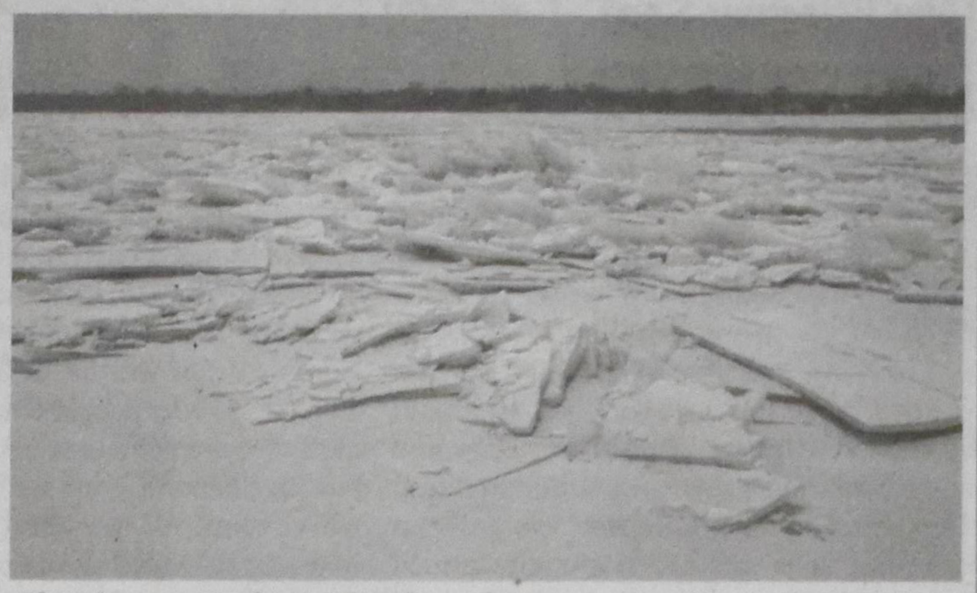
New Calvinism *....continued*

and respond to a holy God. Driscoll claims he is a "Calvin" and not a "Calvinist," since he likes what Calvin says about the sovereignty of God, but believes "Calvinism" has distorted and made overly complex a system of subordinate teaching and practices. He is big on election, since God is obviously the author of salvation, but is not a double predestinarian like Piper and Mohler, posing that God's love for humankind in Jesus extends in some way beyond the elect. The great nineteenth-century British evangelist Charles Haddon Spurgeon is his hero and mentor in this.

So are these "New Calvinists" true Calvinists? It depends on which branch of the Reformed family colored your hair!

Next time, reflections on whether the"New Calvinism" is a trend or signpost.

Artful Eye



The photo was taken in Lambton County.

Marianne VanderSpek is a photographer and farmer living near Florence, Ont. She attends Dresden CRC.

Easter Devotional

Winnipeg, Canada

Spring here attends You
with rude violence,
snow-melted blight exposing
brittle arrows of trees, barbed shrubs,
sodden ground littered with last year's toy or shoe –
a testament to the wasteland of the heart
before the warm blast of breath that bursts
open the pod, unclenches the fisted bud.

The river rumbles, ice breaking into jagged slabs
thundering and carving its way through –
now flooding the plain, now grinding down
the beds of stone beneath its weighted flowing.

Bread left out for the birds,
sopping with spring sleet becomes a sponge
for the wine of Your thirst,
or in the same day in the dry heat of a sudden sun
a crust so hard it is the stone
that cries out Your name.

How spring here lays bare its naked terrain
in remembrance of Your dying flesh,
its vein soon to rupture too, with the blood
of new life, to seep in at the edges.

The mourners still in their winter overcoats,
boots laden with the mudcake debris of last year's leaves,
tramp past Your cross, hushed with lowered eyes
to a ground tarred and dark with death.

They will await the coming season
like the old woman at the kitchen window
straining to see the sky stitched
with the jagged V of returning geese,
harbingers of the season like the unraveled linen
trailing the path in front of the opened tomb.

Sally Ito

Sally Ito (sito@cmu.ca) is a writer living in Winnipeg. She has published two books of poetry, Frogs in the Rain Barrel *and* Season of Mercy. *Her next book of poetry,* Alert to Glory, *is forthcoming in the fall of 2011 from Turnstone Press: turnstonepress.com.*

Columns

My Window Seat

Mendelt Hoekstra

'Professional faith'

My wife Shannon was baptized and gave her public profession of faith in our church last week. It was a wonderful and meaningful service. The Holy Spirit's presence was thick and could be seen and felt in handshakes, hugs and tears. Shannon grew up unchurched and unimpressed with Christians. She grew up in a rural town that had a strong reformed immigrant community. Sadly it was that community that turned Shannon and her family off the idea of going to church. The first time I met her family, Shannon creatively suggested to me that I don't mention to her parents that I have a Dutch last name and that I pretend not to be reformed. So I untucked my shirt and left my salty black liquorice (*dropjes*) in the van. The charade didn't last too long because my hair is blond and I stand about 10 inches taller than the tallest in their family.

I grew up in a community where people knew what profession of faith was. It was something that usually happened about 17 years after you were baptized. I grew up familiar with the Trinity, John Calvin and the parable of the mustard seed. I knew what "Sunday shoes" meant and that you got less dirty on Sunday morning than you would on any other particular morning. I knew what the Lord's supper meant (as much as the human mind can grasp), and could sing the three-fold Amen.

I also, sadly, knew how wrong, misguided and hurtful people can be when they discuss things related to worship. Growing up in a Christian Reformed Church that eventually split up related to issues that I didn't deem worthy of such a schism, I understood why people could dislike Christians. We are sometimes a toxic, infighting bunch. Shannon grew up in a community where some of the churchgoers seemed like they belonged to an exclusive club that required a cultural admissions test.

We now belong to a Christian Reformed Church community that I am so proud to be a part of. A community that embraces cultural diversity, that loves the unchurched in the way Jesus does and is encouraging and open to real life struggles. Our new community has shattered the notions and beliefs that Shannon and her family had about the "Dutch reformed." Some of her unchurched family members, some who vowed 15 years ago never to step into a church like ours, attended the baptism and profession of faith and although they didn't understand most of what was happening, were open to further discussion. Praise to the Holy Spirit.

Here is a song chosen for the congregation to sing at the service. A fitting reminder of God's faithfulness to us all:

All Along

Long I wandered in the darkness
On the paths of death and sin
With this life so disappointed
From this world deceived within
Then I cried out who can help me
Who can save me from this woe
Then I heard the Saviour's voice say
How I've loved you all along

Chorus
All along all along
How I've loved you all along
Long before you ever sought Me
Yes I've loved you all along

To His feet He gently brought me
Gave me life within my soul
From the depths of woe He raised me
With His blood He made me whole
Now I feed in greener pastures
And my Shepherd's voice I know
When I hear His words of comfort say
I've loved you all long

To this world I'm now a stranger
Former things I've left behind
Now in Jesus Christ my treasure
All the joys of life I find
Oh how marvellous His goodness
And each day with Him to grow
Ever listening to His voice say
Yes I've loved you all along

O come burdened one come to Him
Every sin He will forgive
See the cross upon Golgotha
Trust in Jesus Christ and live
Seek no more the worthless pleasures
Of this empty world below
And You'll hear the Saviour's voice say
How I've loved you all along

Thomas Slawson

Our four year old, who soaks up anything to do with Jesus, was very excited about the service. She kept calling it mom's "professional faith." It is a sign of God's faithfulness when, as a four, seven and eight year old, you get to experience your new mother's baptism and profession of faith. It is even more special when all five of your children sing *Blessed Be Your Name*, a song of testimony at the service. It was one of those special times that reminds us that at the end of the day, culture and salty black liquorice are irrelevant and that Christ is all that matters. There is nothing professional about faith.

Mendelt Hoekstra (mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com) lives near St. Catharines, Ont.

Psalm 96: Declare the Glory *by Melanie Pyke (melpyke.com)*

Toddlers to Teens

Denise Dykstra

Friendship and other perks

I'm frustrated with my daughter. She's been whining for an hour straight and I can't seem to get her to stop. My mind automatically scans through the faces of my friends, looking for the one who'll most likely relate to this. I call her on the phone, knowing she'll be able to offer just the support I need.

I'm proud of my son. For the first time ever he got straight A's on his report card. My thoughts stray to a friend who lives close by and who's seen how hard he's been working lately. I seek her out at school, eager to share the good news with someone I know will appreciate it.

I'm worried about my firstborn . . . I'm excited for my youngest child . . . I'm angry with my teenager . . . I'm thankful for my baby; whatever it is I'm feeling, it's a blessing to be able to share it with a friend. Whether they're a phone call or a short walk away, friends make being a parent a whole lot easier.

In Genesis 2:18 we read: "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" God created us as social beings and he provides for our social needs. He gave us friends for companionship, encouragement and help.

Mothers especially benefit from being part of a community. Being a mom is complicated and difficult, and who else but another mom can validate that fact? Our husbands would if they could, but they're just not wired the same. They think differently than we do and are not always able to fully understand where we're coming from.

Moms who are able to connect with other moms gain confidence, reassurance and support. They're comforted by knowing that there are others who are also dealing with tiredness, temper tantrums and teenagers. And when the going gets tough, they have a support system in place to remind them that no one is able to meet some impossible ideal of motherhood.

By any beans necessary

An additional blessing: many of the connections women make through motherhood end up lasting for the rest of their lives. I've been fortunate to experience this so I can speak to it firsthand. Anita, Carolyn, Wendy and I met when we were in our early 20s. We started getting together for weekly visits in 1994 when we all had children in a three and a half month span. Two commonalities brought us together: motherhood and a love of coffee.

As the years passed by, the four of us shopped together, walked together and talked together. We shared baby clothes, baby stories and baby tips. And eventually, when we had too many kids and too much to do to get together so often, we started a coffee club to keep connected. Each week one of us would take a few minutes out of our busy day and make a trip to the nearest Tim Horton's. We'd deliver a steaming hot cup of coffee to the other three so they could enjoy it in the comfort of their own homes without having to pack up their kids and pick it up themselves.

Now all but one of our 15 children are in school and the four of us are back to meeting once a week in person. We still talk about our kids, but no longer about diapers and dolls. Recently it's been dating, drivers' licenses and Dordt College.

Such long-term friendships are camaraderie at its best. Together we've weathered premature babies, marriage struggles and the deaths of parents. We've celebrated anniversaries, graduations and promotions. We've cried, laughed, danced and prayed.

These three women know me better than anyone else. They rejoiced with me when I got married, visited me in the hospital when my kids were born, wept with me when it was time for my foster babies to leave, celebrated with me when I was able to adopt. Throughout the years they've encouraged me, comforted me, advised me and inspired me. And the best part of all? I know with absolute certainty they'll walk by my side through all the joys and tragedies of the future. With a cup of coffee in hand, of course.

Denise Dykstra (dykstras@telus.net) lives in Edmonton, Alberta. She's a writer and mother of five.

Columns

The Public Square

Harry Antonides

'Their blood still cries out'

All too often, westerners – even devout western Christians – remain oblivious to the tragedies that embrace their sisters and brothers half-a-world away" (Paul Marshall, *Their Blood Cries Out*, p. 39).

Paul Marshall's book is a reminder of the suffering millions of Christians continue to endure in countries ruled by Sharia law. His descriptions of the gruesome ways in which, women and young girls especially, are mutilated and killed are painful to read.

Egypt has the largest number of Christians in the Middle East – eight to ten million – in a total population of 80 million. Because of the popular uprising that ended Hosni Mubarak's regime, Egypt now has an opportunity to become a genuinely free society. But it might also turn in the opposite direction. Until now the Coptic Church has been severely, often violently, persecuted. What will the future bring for these hard-pressed fellow Christians?

Two important clues

An important clue to the answer of this question lies in the current transitional government's treatment of the Christian minority. A second, equally telling indication is whether or not the radical Muslim Brotherhood will manage to obtain a position of supremacy. On both counts the signs are not encouraging.

The history of Egyptian (Coptic) Christianity, though it predates Islam, has been one of hardship and discrimination. That eased up some during the 19th till the mid-20th century when Egypt underwent a process of secularization. During the presidency of Anwar Sadat, beginning in 1970 and ending with his assassination in 1981, the government began a more intensive application of Islamic law.

In 1980 the government declared Egypt to be an Islamic state and Sharia as the principal source of legislation. Consequently, Christians were subjected to humiliating and often brutal treatment. Wikipedia reports that from 1992 to 1998 Islamist extremists in Egypt are estimated to have killed 127 Copts. *Coptic Solidarity* has reported that during Mubarak's reign more than 1,500 assaults on Copts occurred.

On September 15, 2010, the Al-Jazeera TV program "Without Limits" hosted Islamist Selim el-Awah who accused the Coptic church of having its own militia and weaponry in preparation for war against the Egyptian state The following month demonstrations occurred throughout Egypt where the crowds chanted this warning to the 86-year old Pope: "Shenauda, just wait, we will dig your grave with our own hands," while burning him in effigy (Paul Marshall, NRO, November 1, 2010).

On New Year's Day, 2011, Islamists bombed a Coptic church in Alexandria that left 23 Christians dead and dozens wounded. The Palestinian Islamic Army said that it was responsible for this attack on the Coptic believers. Shortly thereafter, an Islamist killed a Christian and wounded five others on a train.

Nina Shea, director of the Hudson Institute's Center Religious Freedom, reported on March 15 that "in recent weeks Copts have experienced severe human rights setbacks, including progroms, military assaults against their monasteries, and a judicial acquittal in the case of a 2010 massacre inside one of their churches."

President Obama's deaf ear

On June 4, 2009, President Obama addressed the Muslim world at the University of Cairo, co-sponsored by the Al-Azhar University, the oldest and preeminent centre of Islamic learning. Eighteen members of the U.S. Congress pleaded with him to take a stand for minority rights in the Arab world. They told the president: "We urge you to ask [your audience] to help Egypt fight the scourge of terrorism and stand by its Coptic minority, often targeted by extremists' violence."

Dr. Monir Dawoud, chairman of the American Coptic Association, pointed out that President Obama's emphasis on Egypt as a Muslim nation "will give the Muslim Brotherhood and other fanatical and radical Muslim groups the licence to force the application of Shari'a (Islamic) laws upon them."

Two years ago, Obama turned a deaf ear to the cries of the persecuted Christians and told his Muslim audience exactly what they wanted to hear. That included the lies that "Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance" and that Islam has "carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment."

REUTERS

Egyptian Christians touch a blood-splattered mural at the Alexandrian church that suffered a New Year's attack.

In so doing, Obama betrayed the persecuted Christians in Egypt. He brought dishonour to the highest office the American people can entrust to a person. Can we expect him to act any differently during Egypt's current transition?

David Warren, the intrepid journalist at the *Ottawa Citizen*, said it best when he pointed out that Obama did not merely miss an opportunity to speak the truth. Worse, his speech "sabotaged every effort to speak the truth plainly, to the darkest tyrannical forces in the Islamic world. It sold out America, it sold out the West, and it sold out the Muslims, too."

Harry Antonides (hantonides@sympatico.ca) retired as director of the former Work Research Foundation. He lives in Willowdale, Ontario.

Country Living

Meindert Vander Galien

Produce shopping in California vs. Canada

If you are like me, you probably find California-grown strawberries terribly woody and sour. You can take comfort in the fact that California consumers are getting the same bitter-tasting berries in their stores, priced the same as the ones in Canada. .

I bought and sampled many containers of strawberries as my wife and I traveled through Washington State, Oregon and California this past October. We shopped for fresh fruit, groceries (and snacks) in large supermarkets, small stores and shops along the Pacific coast, in the big cities and in the agricultural valleys. The U.S. strawberries you see in the stores usually come from Watsonville, California. Watsonville is a small farming community in Santa Cruz County – a little off the central coast of California. It's about 90 miles south of San Francisco. The central coast boasts that it's the best place in the world to grow strawberries.

Strawberries we bought at Price & Pride, Safeway and Save Mart supermarkets were identical to the ones here – woody, no juice and priced at $3.99. I thought they would be better as we went farther south; they were not. A 16-oz container of Driscoll's in a San Francisco store was also $3.99. Some of the berries were bad the next day after being in our hotel room fridge. In Santa Barbara, we bought more berries in a Save Mart supermarket and in a small Mexican grocery store. They were also hard and sour tasting. Santa Barbara is a little south of Watsonville. So did we get to enjoy any juicy, sweet berries? We did, but only at road stands and farmer's markets.

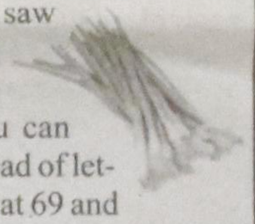
The best tasting berries we had were on our return trip on a strip of desert-like land near Lodi in the North San Joaquin Valley. The berries were grown in a small field directly behind a modest fruit stand. A Hispanic woman who only knew a few English words was selling perfect tasting berries – ripe, red and juicy. You could buy small or large containers for two dollars a pound. Those were the last berries we bought. I was getting tired of eating strawberries, and my fact-finding mission was completed.

You say potato, I say potato

Fruit stands were sometimes an equally big disappointment as the supermarket strawberries. We saw produce that would be rejected in Canadian stores. At one stand, apples were priced at $1.50 each, unappealing grapefruit and oranges for a dollar, and a dozen dry cobs of corn for five dollars. I tried a rejected orange, however, and it was juicy and very sweet.

Shopping in U.S. supermarkets was an interesting experience. I chatted with store employees and managers whenever possible – discussing foods. They were always helpful. A dozen ordinary eggs in San Francisco cost $1.99 (other places as low as $1.79), cage-free eggs were $3.99 and all-natural eggs were $4.99. In Visalia, a farming area, a carton of 18 eggs was $1.79. The large supermarkets don't devote much cooler space for butter, just five feet. Butter is very pricey ($4.99) and milk is a bargain. Milk can be bought for as low as $2.50 a gallon in places. In Bakersfield, a dairy farming area with large herds, a gallon (3.8 L) cost $3.19, skim milk $2.79.

The biggest surprise we had was the price of produce. I saw green onions that cost $1.19 each in California, whereas in Ontario you can get two for 99 cents. A head of lettuce was $2.99, bananas at 69 and 79-cents a pound, apples at $1.09 apiece, bread at over $3.00. Price is discounted on some items if you have a store membership, so that bananas could be 49-cents. Meat is cheaper than in Canada.



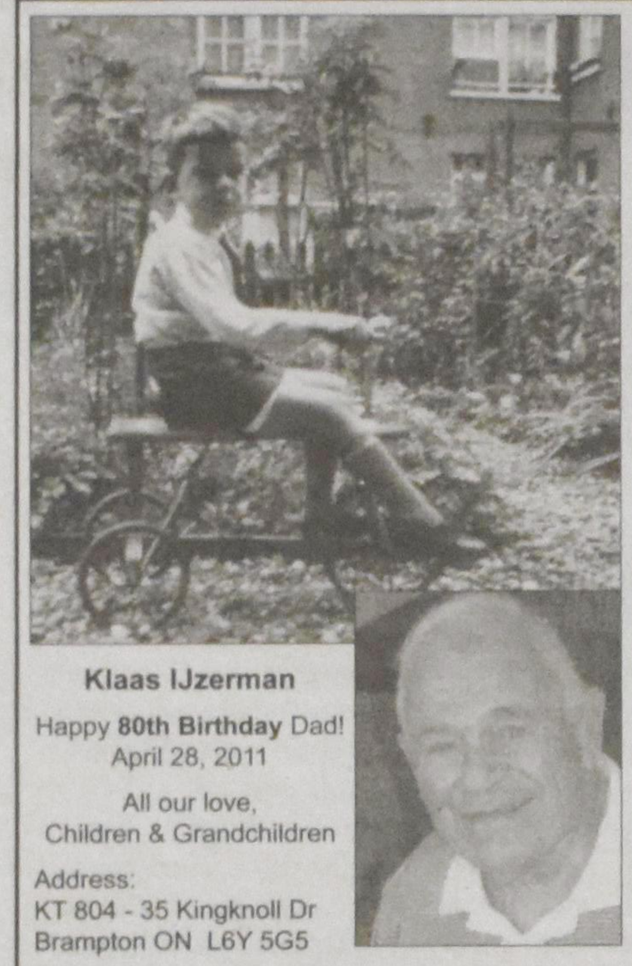
Stores have long aisle shelves of beer and wine at low prices. Cigarette advertising is on the front windows of large drug stores, very visible to anyone driving by. Smokes of all kinds are at the entrance of the stores, on the front wall. Aisles of pop, chips and junk food are on the right hand side of the store. You can't miss them.

It was interesting keeping track of the differences between grocery shopping in California and Canada. Strange that even produce grown in California is so expensive there. Nonetheless, my wife and I loved California so much we are eagerly returning for another three weeks this fall.

Meindert van der Galien is a Renfrew (Ontario) area farmer and agricultural writer.

Classifieds

Birthday



Klaas IJzerman

Happy **80th Birthday** Dad!
April 28, 2011

All our love,
Children & Grandchildren

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Anniversary

Uithuizen, Gr. Holland — Zephyr, Ontario
1961 — April — 2011

Wedding Text: *The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms.* Deut.33:27a

With praise and thankgiving to our God and Heavenly Father, we the children and grandchildren would like to extend our love and congratulations out to

Pieter Gerhard and Petronella Ryzebol
(nee **Bylsma**)

on their **50th Wedding Anniversary**

May God continue to bless you and keep you for many more years.

Congratulations from your children and grandchildren:

Dianne & Alan Roberts, *Scarborough, ON*
Aaron, Jay, Hannah, Joelle

Ben & Debbie Ryzebol, *Newmarket, ON*
Katie, Alyssa, Kyle, Nicole, Jerome, Anton

John & Carol Ryzebol, *Mt. Albert, ON*
Kirstyn, Tricia, Isaiah, Christine

Glenn Ryzebol, *Mt. Albert, ON*

Tricia Ryzebol – At home with our Heavenly Father

Home Address: 10499 Conc. 4, Zephyr ON L0E 1T0

Obituaries

Birdaard Neth — St. Catharines ON
Feb 10 1949 — March 16 2011

After a courageously fought battle with cancer

Robert Terry De Vries

went to be with his Lord.

Beloved husband of Jeannette (Vanden Bogert)
Dear father of: Sharlene and Lowell Griffin
Paul and Lorraine De Vries
Cherished pake of Katrina and Samantha
Dear brother & brother-in-law of:
Wiebe & Eloise De Vries
Charley & Stella De Vries
Francis & Mary De Vries
John & Klaaske De Vries
Owen & Johanna De Vries
Jane Dykstra
Freda & Albert Kiers
and many nieces and nephews
Robert was predeceased by
sister, Alice Bergman and brothers-in-law John Bergman and Peter Dykstra

Correspondence: Jeannette De Vries
Unit 58 - 275 Pelham Rd
St Catharines ON L2S 3B9

January 18, 1935 - February 21, 2011

Rev. Hendrik (Henk) DeBruyn

The family of Henk DeBruyn announces with sorrow his death.

Henk leaves to mourn
his wife, Frances DeBruyn
his children:
Astrid DeBruyn & Jean LeJeune
Rick DeBruyn & Patricia (Kines) DeBruyn
Jake DeBruyn & Joan (Shaw) DeBruyn
and three grandchildren.

A celebration of Henk's life was held at Indian Family Centre and at Covenant CRC in Winnipeg MB on Feb. 24 & Feb. 25 respectively.

Correspondence address:
Fran DeBruyn
238 - 1865 Gateway Road
Winnipeg MB R2G 4J2
e-mail: fran.debruyn@gmail.com

Lucas Mulder Sr.

of Drayton
went home to be with his lord peacefully at the Royal Terrace Nursing Home, Palmerston on Tuesday March 22, 2011 in his 89th year.

Beloved husband for 63 years of Lammigje (Steenbergen) Mulder.

Dear father of
Roelof Mulder & his wife Mary of Wainfleet
Frederik Mulder & his wife Aly of Brucefield
Piet Mulder & his wife Birgit of Leduc Alberta
Anton Mulder & his wife Jane of Drayton
Harm-Jan Mulder & his wife Margaret of Moorefield
Lucas Mulder Jr. & his wife Willeke of Arthur
Jantina & her husband Henry Valkenburg of Port Perry
Timothy Mulder & his wife Cheryl of Wroxeter
Arnold Mulder & his wife Sharon of Moorefield
Loving grandfather of
36 grand and 28 great-grandchildren.
Brother of: Koop Mulder of B.C. and Jantje and Guus Speckmann of Holland
Brother-in-law of:
Femmie Mulder, Annie Mulder, Jentje Nijmeier, Lukas Steenbergen, Margje Steenbergen, Albertje Steenbergen and Fijgje Heuvelman all of Holland.
John and Hilda Steenbergen of Drayton
Fondly remembered by
many nieces, nephews and friends.
Predeceased by:
one granddaughter Lisa Mulder (2003), brothers: Lucas Mulder(1918), Harm Mulder, Jan Mulder and Roelof Mulder and sisters: Jantje Mulder, Jantina Van Dijk and Harmanna Mulder

The family received friends at the Drayton Christian Reformed Church on Friday, March 25, 2011. Rev. Albert Dreise conducted the Funeral Service on Saturday, March 26, 2011 at 1:00 p.m.

As expressions of sympathy donations to the Back to God Hour would be appreciated by the family.

Arrangements entrusted to
Heritage Funeral Home, Drayton.

Reinder Vanderboor

November 13, 1922 - March 19, 2011
Reinder passed away peacefully into Glory after a short battle with cancer.

He will be greatly missed
by his loving wife Nettie
and their children:
Tina & John Berkhuizen
Roely & Melanie Vanderboor
Bill Vanderboor
Rommie & Sonja Vanderboor
Marsha & Bob France
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Contact information: Nettie Vanderboor
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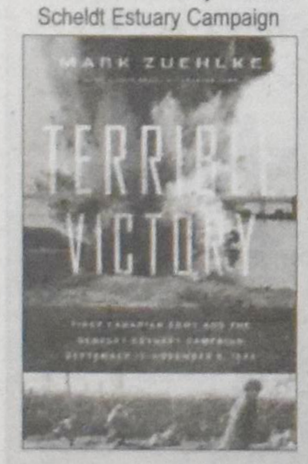

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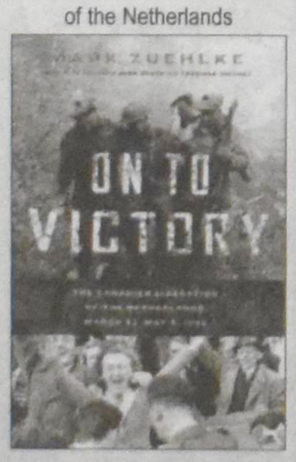

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Apr 9 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre group presents *Vell kabaal op 'Clingendael'* Great Lakes Christian College, **Beamsville**, Ont. at 2 pm. For more information, call 519 283 6285 or 519 424 2985 or see ad Feb 14 issue.

Apr 8-10 Marriage Encounter weekend. **London, Ont**. Register at www.reformedme.org

Apr 10 Dutch Service will be held in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching. DVDs are available

Apr 10 The Georgetown Bach Chorale concert. See ad for details.

Apr 12 Talking Book Library Open House: 4-7 pm at 3844 Stouffville Rd, Stouffville. The Talking Book Library is a national program funded by cbm Canada (formerly Christian Blind Mission). It provides over 2,000 audio booksl to Canadians with blindness or print disabilities, free of charge. See **cbmcanada.org/tbl** for more information.

Apr 16 Guelph Community Christian School, formerly known as John Calvin Christian School, is celebrating 50 years of nurturing, educating and inspiring children. All former staff and students are invited to attend celebration festivities. For more information please contact us by phone 519-824-8860 or email 50celebrations@guelphccs.ca Check us out on the web http://www.guelphccs.ca/50th.html .

Apr 28 Joe Grootenboer Retirement Celebration. Toronto District Christian High, 377 Woodbridge Ave., **Woodbridge**, Ont. See ad or www.tdchristian.ca for more information

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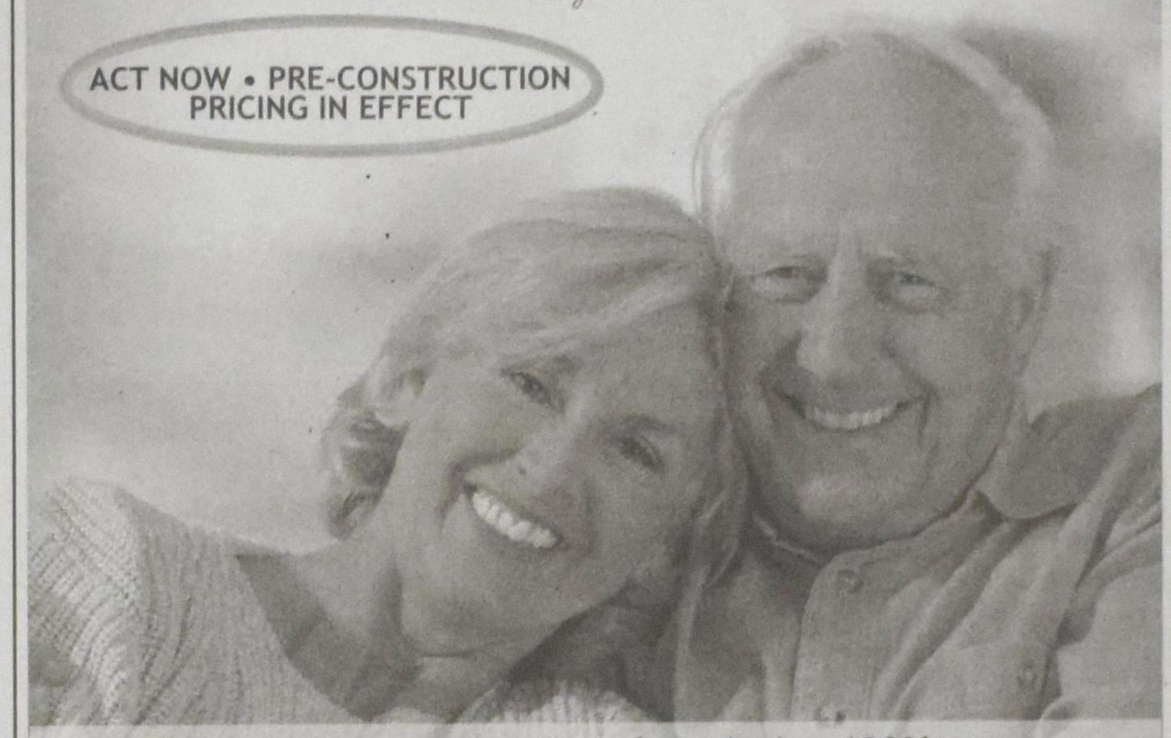

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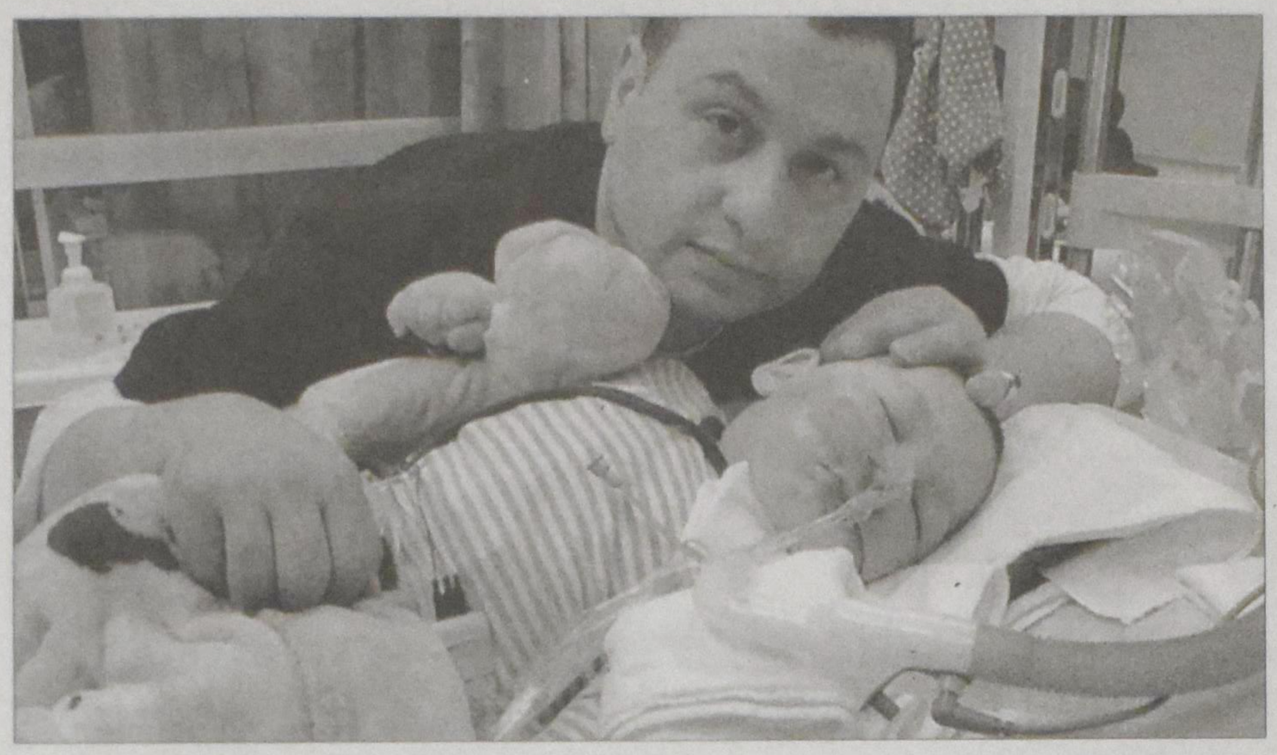


Baby flown to U.S. after Ontario hospital aimed to remove ventilator against parents' will

Patrick Craine

LONDON, Ontario – The family of a dying one-year-old, whose London hospital sought to remove his ventilator against their wishes, will now bring him home for his last days after U.S. and Canadian pro-life groups intervened to get him to a U.S. hospital.

"It's a miracle. My son now has freedom. I'm very happy," said Windsor-native Moe Maraachli, father of Baby Joseph. "Joseph got his human right to get a chance [for] a second opinion. When God wants to take his life he'll take it and nobody can say 'No' to God."

Joseph, who suffers from a severe neurological disorder, had been treated at London's Victoria Hospital since October. The parents asked that he be given a tracheotomy so they could bring him home to die, as they did with their daughter Zina, who died eight years ago of similar complications.

The London doctors refused, however, maintaining the procedure was too risky. The surgery, which involves inserting a breathing tube through a slit in the throat, has often been used because it allows for suction of fluid out of the lungs, creates a safe and stable way to use a mechanical ventilator and is more comfortable for the child.

The Consent and Capacity Board of Ontario sided with the hospital in January based on doctors' testimony that Joseph was in a permanent vegetative state with no brain stem reflex. Ontario Superior Court Justice Helen Rady upheld that decision on February 17th.

Pro-life response

The hospital very quickly came under intense public pressure with the launch of a 'Save Baby Joseph' Facebook page that has since grown to over 15,000 supporters. Nevertheless, empowered by the court, the doctors were set to remove Joseph's ventilator against his parents' wishes sometime shortly after February 21st at 10 a.m. But they backed off after the London-based Euthanasia Prevention Coalition (EPC) hired expert lawyer Mark Handelman on the family's behalf.

With the hospital continuing to refuse the procedure, and threatening to have Ontario's public guardian assume decision-making power, Fr. Frank Pavone of the U.S.-based Priests for Life promised to cover Joseph's medical expenses if a U.S. hospital could be found to take over Joseph's care.

On March 13th, Joseph flew in an air ambulance to Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center in St. Louis, Missouri, which performed the tracheotomy on March 21st. After spending seven days in the intensive care unit, he is to be transferred to a pediatric hospital in St. Louis for a short time, and will then be able to go home.

Dr. Paul Byrne, an Ohio expert neonatologist with 50 years experience, insisted that Joseph ought to have had the tracheotomy all along. He went further, saying that in his many years he's never removed a child's ventilator. "If a baby has a disease process that's so bad that they're going to die, then they die on the ventilator anyway," he told **LifeSiteNews.com**.

Alex Schadenberg, the EPC's executive director, warned that the court decision creates a system in which doctors can force life and death decisions on patients. In a March 14 blog post, he said the case highlights the need to overhaul Ontario's Health Care Consent Act. The system is "loaded against families" because hospitals have "nearly unlimited financial resources" for a legal battle when disagreements arise, he said, which has led to "a growing body of precedent-setting cases that constantly increase the power of the doctor/hospital to make medical decisions against the wishes of the family."

"The system should also pay the cost for the family," he suggested.

Patrick Craine resides in Halifax with his wife Jenna and son Noah. He is a freelance writer pursuing an M.A. in Philosophy.

Odds and Trends

Psalmody notes

Who's the composer?

Years ago, when I was teaching at Covenant College, we celebrated the Easter season in chapel by singing "Christ the Lord is Risen Today." Next to me stood a staff member, arms folded, lips tightly shut – not because he didn't believe in the resurrection, but because according to him we were to sing only the Old Testament Psalms of David and not "songs of human composition." Thus some churches, such as the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America and the Protestant Reformed Churches, hardly ever sing hymns. The Christian Reformed Church did not sing hymns in worship until 1934.

Upcoming Psalters

The Canadian Reformed Churches are revising their *Book of Praise*, which includes both psalms and hymns. Even though the "Anglo-Genevan Psalter" section has been thoroughly revised, it continues in the tradition of the Genevan Psalter and one wonders if this will ever catch on in North America outside of the Dutch tradition. Another fine Psalter published in a new edition recently (2009) is the *Book of Psalms for Worship* by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, offering more than one versification for many of the longer psalms.

The projected CRC-RCA psalter and hymnal is very significant. The committee is actually working on two titles: a hymnal/songbook with all the psalms scattered throughout in thematically appropriate sections (coming in 2013), and a unique Psalter that will include the complete biblical text in order, with suggestions for congregational reading and *chanting* (2012).

Fudging?

Recently I heard an interviewer ask a country-music singer if the story of his life as told in song was true. "Well," said the country boy, "we had to fudge a little to make it rhyme." And of course, anyone who has tried to adapt the biblical text (either in Hebrew or English) to a certain meter and rhyme will admit both that it is a great challenge to do so, and that some fudging is unavoidable. One only has to check any psalm book against the biblical text, or compare one psalm book against another, and find deletions, additions and fanciful translations. To cite just one example, Psalm 89:10 reads, "You crushed Rahab like a carcass" or "like one who is slain." Rahab is probably a mythical sea monster. I have yet to find a psalter that includes the name "Rahab." A minor point? Perhaps. Or the slippery slope of turning God's Hebrew Word into poetic English?

Versification variety

In fact, Psalms no longer are the inspired Word but human poetry. Psalm 137:9 is one of the most terrible texts in Scripture, and versifiers have struggled mightily with it – both for poetic and humanitarian reasons. "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones" (Ps. 137:9, *KJV*).

Les Psaumes de Clement Marot, French Genevan Psalter (1562)
Happy those who will snatch
Your infants from your impure breast,
To dash them against the hard stones.

Psalms and Hymns, Reformed Protestant Dutch Church (1847)
Jesus, with vengeance arm'd shall come
To crush his foes, and seal their doom,

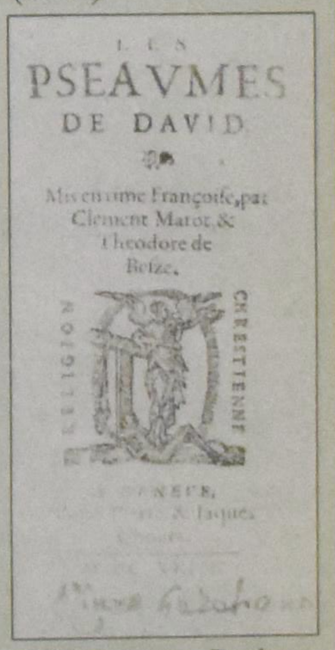
Psalter Hymnal, Christian Reformed Church (1934)
How happy he who shall repay,
The bitter hatred of her foe.

Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter, Canadian Reformed Churches (1984)
How happy he who shall, devoid of pity
Dash on the rocks the children of your city!

Psalter Hymnal, CRC (1987)
Babylon great – your seed be smashed!
Vengeance shall come from God our Lord.

Praise Trust (2000)
Be warned of the judgment on you and your children
When blasphemy fails and when tyranny falls.

– **Harry Boonstra**



1618 Genevan Psalter

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